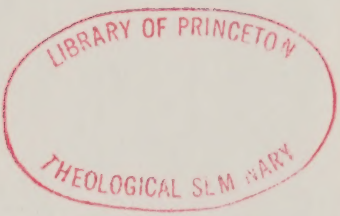

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VOL. II. THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW DEVOTION: being the lives of Gerard Groote, Florentius Radewin, and their followers. Translated by J. P. ARTHUR.

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VOL. IV.

Meditations and Sermons on the Incarnation, Life, and Passion of Our Lord

NIHIL OBSTAT

Joseph Wilhelm, S.T.D., Censor Deputatus.

IMPRIMI POTEST

✠ Gulielmus Episcopus Arindelensis,

Vicarius Generalis.

Westmonasterii,

die 1 Nov., 1906.

Statue of Thomas à Kempis
at Kempen.
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A Meditation
on the Incarnation of Christ

Sermons
on the Life and Passion of Our Lord
and
Of Hearing and Speaking Good Words

BY

THOMAS À KEMPIS

CANON REGULAR OF THE CONGREGATION
OF WINDESHEIM

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AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE TEXT OF THE
EDITION OF MICHAEL JOSEPH POHL, PH.D.

BY

DOM VINCENT SCULLY, C.R.L.
AUTHOR OF "LIFE OF THE VENERABLE
THOMAS À KEMPIS"

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TO

MY ESTEEMED FRIEND

SIR FRANCIS CRUISE

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INTRODUCTION

A NEW critical text of the "Omnia Opera" of Thomas à Kempis is being edited by Dr. M. Joseph Pohl, of Bonn, in seven volumes, of which four have already appeared, and the remainder are to be issued in the course of 1907. An eighth volume is to contain a life of the author, a dissertation on his various writings, and a vindication of his title to the "Imitation" by the same industrious hand. The publishers, Messrs. Herder, are doing their work in a way worthy of the subject matter, and of the painstaking toil of the editor; their volumes are a pleasure to behold and handle, a masterpiece of the printer's and the bookbinder's art, a contrast indeed to the unwieldy tomes and cramped letterpress, to which, apart from the "Imitation," students of the Ven. à Kempis have hitherto been accustomed. From this edition is taken Dr. Duthoit's translation,

"Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ," published in 1904 by Messrs. Kegan Paul, as also the present volume and the remainder, five in all yet to appear, of this series, embracing, with the exception of the "Imitation," the complete works of à Kempis. Various parts, in fact quite a large proportion of these writings have been already rendered into English, and in many cases well, but at various times, by various hands, in various forms; and it was felt that even a thorough supplement of the portions not yet translated or not translated satisfactorily could in no wise compare with the advantages of a complete, uniform edition, one in fact to rival in English the work so admirably done by Dr. Pohl and Messrs. Herder in the original.

The fact that there is a demand, irrespective of class and creed, for these writings of à Kempis in the vulgar tongue, is one that speaks well for the English people. And whatever other reasons may be brought forward in explanation, it seems to me that the chief cause is one that lies deep in the heart and conscience of the nation. The remarkable love of Englishmen for the "Imitation" and for the other works of the saintly à Kempis may be traced to the strong, personal love which, in however lesser a degree, they share with him for Our Divine Saviour.

It is well known that in pre-Reformation days England was famous for her devotion to the person of the Incarnate Son of God. She was called

the most Christian nation of Europe, and precisely, it seems, because of her deep-rooted love and reverence for Christ. The unhappy upheaval of the sixteenth century wrought many sad changes and brought in its train irreparable losses. These have been further accentuated by the countless religious divisions that immediately followed and that still daily spring up around us. But the love of Jesus Christ was too firmly set in the depths of the spirit and traditions of the English people ever to be wholly changed or entirely lost. And for those numerous pious souls who to-day long and pray for the re-union of Christendom there is no more assured motive for the hope that they cherish, no basis more practical for what efforts they can individually essay, than this common love for the Master, Whose name we all glory to bear.

The great attraction, then, which the mysticism of Thomas à Kempis and of the whole school of Windesheim exercises over the English people is to be found in the principal character of that mysticism, an overflowing, simple, almost childlike love and devotion for the person of the Divine Saviour. The opening words of the "Imitation" strike the keynote: "Let it be our chief study to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ." And the whole spiritual philosophy of that masterpiece may be summed up in the counsel: Shake off all that can hinder free access to Jesus; eagerly embrace all that can make the soul more like to Jesus, bring

her nearer to Him, confirm her in closer union of divine love. There are passages there, whole chapters, familiar to all the world, which treat directly of this union in love, and which breathe the most pure and ardent affection. But from the very nature of the work, this latter element finds more free and tender, though certainly not more deep and full expression in the author's other and less-known writings.

What can compare, for instance, with the exquisite tenderness in some of the passages of the Sermons on the Infant Saviour, V-VIII, in this volume? Read especially Sermon VIII, where free rein is given to devotion in kissing the "feet, hands, and mouth of Jesus." And again in Sermon VII, who cannot relish something of the poetry of the sublime simplicity with which the venerable author offers himself to render various little menial services in the Cave of Bethlehem. Bethlehem indeed and Calvary always seem to appeal with the greatest force to the holy Canon Regular, and to call forth the tenderest expressions of the burning love which consumed his soul. And herein again we find him in touch with the truest Christian instincts of the English people, for whom, in spite of growing ignorance, indifference, and materialism, Christmas and Good Friday are still the chief solemnities of the year.

In addition to this general influence over a whole nation which à Kempis wields as a true

interpreter of its noblest aspirations, and apart also from the power, second only to that of Holy Writ, exercised over countless generations by the pages of the "Imitation," numberless individual instances might be cited of the fascination which the personality of this humble Religious exerts, and of the enthusiasm which his writings arouse in almost every age and country. One has only to remember for a moment the host of zealous scholars who have stood forth to defend the title of à Kempis to the "Imitation" from the day it was first impugned, and whose learned and voluminous labours have now, we may well hope, settled the question for ever.

Two of these, and by no means the least devoted or illustrious in the roll, are with us and active still, Sir Francis Cruise and Dr. Pohl, and each dates his hero-worship of à Kempis from earliest childhood. The former still recalls with gratitude his first copy of the "Imitation," presented him by his sister. The perusal so awakened his interest and enthusiasm that his question at once was, what manner of man had written this? It was then he first learnt of the regretable controversy, to the solution of which he henceforth devoted the scanty leisure of a most strenuous career, a labour of love which has been to a great extent its own reward, and which has earned for him the esteem and gratitude of thousands. It is due to his suggestion that the present writer first conceived the idea of a complete

translation of all the works of à Kempis, a labour, he said, which had been the dream of his life. It is to him, therefore, that this volume is affectionately dedicated.

Dr. Pohl also, in a touching little passage, "Thomæ à Kempis, Opera Omnia," vol. ii, p. 484, traces back his love of the author to the first-remembered lessons of a simple, pious mother, whose reading was almost entirely confined to her prayerbook and her "Imitation." One result of these early impressions is the new edition to which reference has been already made, the fruit of years of patient scholarly labour and research, a work which will doubtless render the good Professor's name as immortal as that of à Kempis himself.

With regard to the present volume, "A Meditation on the Incarnation of Christ, etc.," Dr. Pohl's text is a careful edition of the autograph MS. preserved in the Royal Library, Brussels, 4585-4587. An inscription is inserted to the effect: "Dono dedit anno 1755 R. P. Rumoldus Waynants museo nostro praesente et consentiente R. P. Provincia(le)." On the top of the first page is written further: "Collegij Soc^{tis} Jesu Contraci." A Jesuit, Simon Wynants, was Professor of Grammar at the time and place mentioned in these two notices, and the presumption is that the donor of the manuscript was a relative of his. In any case, at the suppression of the Society, 1773, the valuable manuscript found its way, with so many other

treasures of the Jesuit libraries in Belgium, to Brussels.[1]

The Codex contains, in addition to the Meditation and Sermons, the "Alphabetum Monachi," a fragment in Low German, "Van goeden woerden to horen ende die to spreken," and some canticles. These latter seem to have been added as an afterthought to fill some odd pages; the "Alphabetum" is found also in other manuscripts, and I am giving its translation in a subsequent volume, containing several treatises, all concerning life and discipline in the cloister. But the German fragment, of which Dr. Pohl gives a Latin version, I thought as well to place here, ending this volume as it ends the autograph codex, with its date, 1456.

This date, 1456, at which time Thomas à Kempis was in his seventy-seventh year, of itself signifies nothing more than that this small treatise was then copied and the codex completed. But from internal evidence Dr. Pohl is of opinion that the other works translated here are of the same period.[2]

The titles here given, "A Meditation on the Incarnation of Christ," and "Sermons on the Life and Passion of Our Lord," are those assigned by the author himself and by all his editors, with the exception of Sommalius, whose edition has

[1] "Thomæ à Kempis, Opera Omnia," vol. iii, p. 403.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 421.

hitherto been the best known and most used. Sommalius puts the Meditation and Sermons together under one head, "Conciones et Meditationes triginta sex utilissimae," with the following interesting appreciation: "In this second part of the first volume are contained both sermons and meditations, very profitable and devout. The sermons are such that they seem to be meditations. Likewise the meditations are so written that sermons can be made of them."

A striking likeness will be found between the contents of the present volume and Dr. Duthoit's translation, already mentioned, "Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ." Dr. Pohl collects from the two works a number of parallel passages of evident similarity.[1] Indeed, it is the eminent critic's opinion that this resemblance was the occasion of the puzzling omission, without a word of explanation, in Sommalius' third edition of the above "Prayers and Meditations," which had already appeared in his second, under the title "De vita et beneficiis, etc." This second edition is the best that appears under Sommalius' name. At the time of publishing the third edition the learned Jesuit was already eighty years of age, and moreover actively engaged in other affairs. Dr. Pohl then argues that he left the care of this new edition to his publisher, with the result that the latter, noticing the similarity between the two treatises in question, took the liberty,

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 416 *seq.*

without his knowledge or consent, of suppressing one of them.[1]

The question will naturally occur to many, whether these sermons were actually delivered as such, and, if delivered, to whom. We know that for two periods of his life, covering a considerable number of years, Thomas à Kempis was sub-prior of the Canonry of Mount St. Agnes. One of the duties of this office was the care and instruction of the novices and younger professed brethren. And in fact we have a whole volume of sermons by à Kempis, thirty in all, addressed to novices, a translation of which will appear shortly. With regard to these the author expressly states that they are a collection of discourses "given at different times to our novices by way of sweet conference."[2] There is another treatise of "Nine Sermons to the Brethren." But we know from Francis Tolensis and other biographers that à Kempis frequently preached to the people also, who, as the fame of his holiness of life and eloquence and unction of word spread abroad, flocked in crowds to the Mount to hear him. Hence the inference would be that these present Sermons, treating of the mystery of our Redemption from its revelation to the prophets to the descent of the Holy Ghost, were in the first instance actually preached to the faithful. The difficulty is that much therein seems addressed directly to religious, and that

[1] Vol. iii, p. 416; vol. v, p. 396.

[2] Prol. in serm. ad nov.

the whole tone is of too elevated a devotion for the people in general.

However, we must bear in mind the particular class of faithful who would form the majority of his audience, and the close connection of these with the Canons of the Windesheim Congregation. To realize this better we must go back to the origin of this Congregation, as described by John Buschius in his "Chronicles of Windesheim," and by à Kempis himself in his charming biographies of Gerard Groote, Florence Radewyn, and others their disciples, an excellent translation of which forms one of the volumes of this series, "The Founders of the New Devotion." The question is treated at some length in my "Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis" (London, Washbourne), ch. i-v.

To give here a brief résumé: Gerard Groote was a cleric of Deventer, in Holland, who, after a more or less worldly youth, came under the influence of the great religious movement, which invaded the Low Countries in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and became himself its chief protagonist. At the end of three years' retirement in the Carthusian Convent of Monichuisen, acting on the advice of friends there, Gerard went forth to communicate to others by word and example some of the zeal for perfection with which he was himself filled. To this end he received deacon's orders from the Bishop of Utrecht—his humility forbade him ever to aspire

to the priesthood—and authority also to preach. "Clergy, religious, and laity, men, women, and children, learned and ignorant, princes, magistrates, lawyers, tradesmen, servants, pilgrims, and beggars—all flocked to hear the new apostle, and listened for hours to his impassioned exhortations to repent of their sins, to despise the fleeting pleasures of the world, to lead a better life. His words bore marvellous fruit. Besides the many sinners whom he recalled to a sense of their duty, numbers of the clergy and laity placed themselves unreservedly in his hands, and under his direction began to lead lives that in simplicity, devotion, and contempt of the world rivalled those of the primitive Christians."[1]

Through much misrepresentation and some unfortunate misunderstanding an inhibition was procured from the Ordinary forbidding Groote to preach. He submitted at once. Retiring to his native town, he now devoted himself unreservedly to the task of forming to a perfect Christian life the many who had been converted by his burning eloquence. A large band of disciples, priests, clerics and laymen, gathered round him, not forsaking their ordinary avocations, but united simply by an ardent pursuit of holiness, and an earnest emulation of the fervour of the first Christians, the unworldliness or other-worldliness, poverty, simplicity, and devotion of early days. At the suggestion of his most devoted admirer

[1] "Life of the Ven. Thomas à Kempis," p. 4.

and follower, Florence Radewyn, Gerard consented that some, who so chose, should live together in community, though still bound by no manner of vow. The greater proportion of those who availed themselves of this permission were poor students, frequenting the public schools of Deventer. One stringent rule was that all should labour for their maintenance. This was to prevent abuses which, throughout the Netherlands and elsewhere, had arisen in similar bodies of men and women, who had commenced in a laudable spirit of poverty to live on alms, but who had degenerated into idle and insolent beggars. The chief work undertaken by the students was that of copying manuscripts, a highly-appreciated and well-paid service in those days, before the invention of the press. At the same time, a community was formed of pious females, who, following a similar manner of life under the guidance of a confessor, supported themselves also by the labour of their hands. They were called simply, "Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life." The whole movement was known as the *New Devotion*, and its followers styled the *Devout*. These latter terms are of frequent occurrence throughout the works of à Kempis.

Gerard Groote, however, anxious for the continuance of the good work and for its preservation against opposition from without and disintegrating elements within, had already conceived the idea of placing the whole body under the protection

and guidance of a canonically instituted religious Order already existing in the Church. While he was maturing his plans and looking for resources to make a commencement, Deventer was devastated by one of the periodical plagues of those days.

Gerard himself fell a victim to his devotedness to the stricken, and at the very moment when the legacy of a pious and wealthy friend had removed the financial difficulties which had hitherto stood in the way of his scheme. However, on his death-bed, as the expression of his last wishes, he told the weeping brethren that as soon as possible some of them should enter an Order approved by the Church, and from the cloister be the guides, directors and protectors of the *Devout* still living in the world. They asked him which Order they should join. Some suggested the Carthusians. Groote objected that they were too secluded for their purpose. Others mentioned the Cistercians. The Master replied that these were too severe. "Rather," said he, "you should enter the Order of Canons Regular. For this Order follows an easier rule, and is well adapted to all who are just able to serve God in holy religion. Neither do these Canons seem to differ much from you in their manner of life, except that they observe by profession and vow what you observe without vows, to wit, charity, and poverty, chastity, and obedience." [1]

[1] John Busch, "Chron. Wind. de orig.," c. v.

And in effect, shortly after the death of Groote, six Devout Brethren founded the monastery of Windesheim, and made their profession in the Order of Canons Regular as the first members of a Congregation, which in a marvellously short space of time covered all the Netherlands with new establishments and affiliated centres. I hope to speak more at length of the Congregation of Windesheim and of the Canonical Order itself in introductory notes to subsequent volumes of this series.

For the first years of its existence the new Congregation drew all its recruits from among the *Devout*. The greater number of the canonical foundations also owed their origin to a humble community of Brothers; Mt. St. Agnes itself, the cloistral home of our venerable author, is a striking instance, as may be seen from the opening pages of his "Chronicle of Mt. St. Agnes." Throughout this Chronicle, as also that of Windesheim, we find constant proofs of the amicable relations, of patronage on the one hand and willing submission on the other, existing between the Canons Regular living under vows in the cloister, and the Congregations, as they were called, or communities of Devout Brothers and Sisters. Busch is especially eloquent in his testimony as to the numbers trained by the Brothers to "contempt of the world, the purpose of a better life, the desire of religion (*i.e.*, the religious state), discipline of morals, fear of God, dread of hell, and love of the

heavenly fatherland," and then sent by them with vocations thus nurtured, not only to join the Canonical Institute, but to become bright examples of observance and zealous reformers in many monasteries of other religious orders also.[1]

The two bodies continued thus side by side for centuries. But the Brothers of the Common Life, after doing magnificent work in art and literature, suffered much from the troubles of the Reformation period, and especially in their schools from the competition of the new Congregations of Religious which arose at that time, devoted to the work of teaching. Both one and the other were swept out of existence by the ravaging storm of the French Revolution.

As a final instance of the primitive spirit of these Devout Brothers and Sisters, I may quote the Rule of Life drawn up for their guidance by Florence Radewyn, after the death of Gerard Groote, as given by Badius Ascensius in his "Vita Thomae à Kempis," c. ix.

"All were to approach as near as possible the life of the Apostles and of the primitive Church of Christ, *so that in the whole congregation there should be one heart, and that no one should consider or call anything his own.* No one should seek outside the house the cure of souls, ecclesiastical benefices, or worldly occupations for the sake of gain; but clerics, who should be found worthy, would be promoted to cures that were not

[1] "Chron. Wind. de viris illus.," c. xvi.

too lucrative. All should dwell together in chastity and poverty, and should be clad in that manner of dress which Gerard Groote had approved. No one should beg from door to door, and in order that they might not be driven to this by want, all should avoid idleness, and according to their abilities should transcribe books, or instruct children. They were to take care that they themselves, and all whom they should teach, should venerate and worship God with the deepest piety. They should love their neighbour with due charity, and should assist the poor with alms, according to their means. All should observe brotherly love. To their Superior or spiritual Father in all lawful and just concerns they should yield unquestioning obedience, considering that their highest merit consisted in charity and submission. All earnings accruing from their labour in common or in private they should, according to the apostolic rule, lay at the feet of the Superior, and if perchance they left the Brotherhood they should carry nothing with them."

When we consider that it was to such as these that à Kempis addressed himself, we need not be surprised at the sublime spirituality pervading his sermons. In the light of these facts, the last three sermons of this volume, for instance, treating of the Holy Ghost and of the primitive Church, are clothed with fresh significance. Indeed, for a right appreciation, not only of these sermons but of all the writings of à Kempis, it is absolutely

necessary to gather some knowledge of the times and characters among which he passed his peaceful days, and especially the atmosphere, intellectual and spiritual, wherein he lived, the spirit of the circle or school of Windesheim.

Happily, without seeking beyond English authors, there is abundance of excellent material for this study. We have Sir Francis Cruise's "Thomas à Kempis. Notes of a visit to the scenes in which his life was spent, with some account of the examination of his relics" (Kegan Paul and Co.). These notes form a most interesting portion of one of our best works on à Kempis and his claims to the authorship of the "Imitation." The same writer has issued two smaller works, through the London Catholic Truth Society, one on the controversy, the other on the life and character of the author of the "Imitation." We have also Rev. S. Kettlewell's "The Authorship of the 'De Imitatione Christi'" (London, Rivingtons), a valuable contribution to the question. By the same author we have "Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life" (Kegan Paul and Co.). This work, in two large volumes, contains a mass of valuable and interesting information on the whole movement of the New Devotion; but, unfortunately, the writer has at times allowed his prejudices to lead him into strange errors, especially in the efforts which he constantly makes to reconcile the conduct and teaching of Gerard Groote and his fol-

lowers with those of the sixteenth century Protestants. There is also the "Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis," mentioned above, compiled chiefly from the writings of à Kempis himself and his contemporaries. Finally, there are the two historical volumes of this series, translated by J. P. Arthur, "The Founders of the New Devotion," and "The Chronicles of Mt. St. Agnes."

A word now as to the method of translation I have adopted in the present and subsequent volumes. The chief object has been absolute fidelity to the thought, expression, and, as far as possible, style of the original. With this end in view, I have underlined and double-underlined the words and passages so marked by the author, as reproduced in Dr. Pohl's edition from such autograph manuscripts as are still extant. For the same reason, I have followed, as closely as the English idiom would permit, the peculiar punctuation of the author, again as faithfully rendered by his recent editor. It is well known that a certain rhythm runs through all the works of à Kempis, purposely introduced, it seems, as an aid to the memory, when books were rare in proportion to their costliness. A special system of punctuation was employed for this purpose, often having reference rather to the sound than to the sense of a passage. Besides the note of interrogation, of which the use was as with us, there were four other signs, the point, or full-stop, followed by a

capital letter, and the same followed by a small letter, the *clivis*, or *flexa*, now obsolete, and the colon. Hirsche, quoted by Dr. Pohl, vol. ii, p. 447, explains that the pause at the full-stop before a capital letter should be long, as with our point, slightly shorter at the *clivis*, shorter still at the colon, and very slight at the full-stop before a small letter. In Dr. Pohl's edition, and, as near as feasible, in this translation, the last-named is represented by a comma, and the *clivis* by a semicolon.

THE TRANSLATOR.

September, 1906.

A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

A MEDITATION

ON THE

INCARNATION OF CHRIST

HERE BEGINNETH A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF HOLY WRIT.

SEARCH the Scriptures," saith the Lord. O most sweet Lord Jesus, grant me Thy unworthy servant devoutly to ponder the mystery of Thy incarnation; to search wisely, to understand sublimely; what is not understood to venerate humbly: and ever to give thanks to Thee for condescension so great, and love so inestimable. For to contemplate this mystery affords me the greatest delight; and amid all Thy other wonders brings me the sweetest savour, touches me most deeply: draws me most mightily, and ravishes my whole spirit within me. Grant me then often to dwell thereon: and carefully to consider how it was foreknown and foretold by the holy prophets. Open Thou my eyes: and I will consider the won- John, 5.ᵛ39. Ps. 118. 18.

drous things of Thy law. For Thou art the founder of the law, Thou the inspirer and teacher of the prophets: by whose utterances in wonderful and manifold ways Thou wast foretold and prefigured; now clearly, now darkly: as the whole sequence of the Old Testament when examined manifestly shows forth. For nothing therein is without mystery; but most faithful witness is there contained as well of Thy divine as of Thy human nature. And although the testimony of men is not necessary to Thee, Who art the Truth, and, at Thy pleasure, makest of men prophets; nevertheless, for our instruction and strengthening in the faith, Thou didst will these things to be foretold and written long before by Thy saints: and Thou didst will to clothe their words with such authority, that no man might dare to gainsay them in any point; so that also when Thou shouldst be present in the flesh, Thou couldst be recognized the King of Israel and Saviour of the World: Whom Holy Writ in so many places had declared to be coming. And this it is that in person Thou didst give as answer to the doctors of the law not believing: but closely watching and cunningly tempting Thee. "Search the scriptures: for you think in them to have life everlasting. And the same are they that give testimony of Me."

John, 5. 39.

The patriarchs give witness: the prophets and the other just give witness of Thy incarnation. For *Abraham*, first of the patriarchs by the merit of his faith and his act of perfect obedience: received this promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." In which seed, to wit, Thou wert designated and prophesied: Who, born of the Virgin Mary, didst truly spring from the flesh of Adam, truly from the stock of

Abraham.

Gen. 22. 18.

Abraham. Who also didst transmit this blessing to all the nations throughout the world, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized: shall be saved." This blessing, I say, is not an earthly, but a heavenly promise: not transitory fruitfulness, but everlasting bliss; unending life with the angels: not temporal length of days. Which, as it was promised to faithful Abraham: so also through Thee was it given to him, and to all the followers of the true faith. For not those only, who were born of Abraham according to the flesh, are to be reckoned children of the promise: but they that follow in the footsteps of his faith are included in the blessing; whether sprung from him of the flesh: or born again of the spirit from the other nations. And therefore he is called the father of many nations, not of the Jews only: but of all them that believe in Thee throughout the universe of peoples. Mark, 16. 16.

A splendid witness also to Thee bears *Isaac*, the son of Abraham, in the things that befel him. For his birth, foretold by an angel, is a presage of Thy nativity: which however far surpasses the manner of birth of all that are born of women. He was brought forth of a barren mother through the promise of an angel: but Thou, promised from the beginning of the world, in a more ineffable fashion wast born of a virgin mother for our salvation. He in his conception gave joy to parents and friends: but Thou in Thy birth didst give great joy to angels and men. This very miracle wrought in the womb of old age makes easy of belief the child-bearing of maidenhood. Thou therefore, Who didst perform this in Thy servant, couldst certainly do more in Thyself. For seeing that Thou art the Author of Isaac.

nature, Thou holdest all things under Thy power: and Thou art bound by the law or right of none.

In him also is resplendent a figure of Thy Passion: when he was bidden sacrifice himself by his Father, to whom a message from God to this effect had previously been brought by an angel. He carried the wood of the sacrifice: Thou didst bear the wood of the cross, unto the wiping out of the handwriting of original sin. He is bound and speedily placed upon the altar: Thou, after Thou hast been bound and cruelly scourged, art at length lifted up upon the cross, that Thou mayest draw all things to Thyself. He was obedient to his father Abraham: and Thou didst obey Thy Father God, even to the death of the cross. He is offered, but not slain: because he was the figure, Thou the truth: he the symbol, Thou the true sacrifice. He should not die, because he was not the redeemer of the world: but Thou shouldst die, still not of Thy own, but for our crime: because, true Redeemer of the world, Thou wert born unto this, and didst receive this commandment from the Father.

Jacob. The patriarch *Jacob* likewise bears most true testimony to Thee. He, taught by the spirit of prophecy: foretold to his children many things to come. For he made known the tribe of which Thou wert to be born, and the time wherein Thou wert to come: when, blessing his son Juda, among other things he said: "The sceptre shall not be taken from Juda," quoth he, "nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent: and He shall be the expectation of nations." Which testimony indeed rightly understood stands undoubtedly accomplished in Thee, Who didst

Gen. 49. 10.

most worthily spring from the tribe of Juda: and didst enter this light of the world at that epoch, when a legitimate ruler had failed in Judea: and a king of foreign race, Herod, there held princely sway. Thou art not therefore awaited, as the Jew madly raves; but Thou art believed to have already come God in the flesh: as the Christian confesses, and the Catholic faith teaches. Certainly, there is no longer a ruler in Judea, the law has ceased therein; the priesthood is silent, the temple has fallen, the kingdom is destroyed, that nation is scattered through the world: that the whole world may know, that Thou, the Saviour of Israel, the expectation of the nations and the desired thereof, hast come. The ancient law then was due to cease, after the new grace and truth shone forth with Thy coming: for all that former dispensation was a minister to give witness to Thee. With this agree the voices of the prophets: who, foreknowing Thy coming, foretold the days of grace in which we abide.

Agg. 2. 8.

For *Moses*, the lawgiver and teacher of Thy people Israel, utters a most trustworthy testimony: "The Lord Thy God will raise up to thee a prophet of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me." Moses called Thee simply a prophet addressing a rude people: who maybe was not yet found capable of grasping a more sublime title of Thee. Which also is sufficiently clear from the gospel, where, when Thou hadst worked the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, this was the saying repeated by the people: "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world." But we, now endued with a more certain truth and a higher understanding of faith: truly confess and believe Thee not only a prophet, but

Moses.

Deut. 18. 15.

John, 6. 14.

the Lord also of the prophets, and the true Son of God. Nor is it strange if Thou didst speak many things darkly to that people by Thy servant Moses, and to us more things more clearly in Thy own person: for thus it befitted the order of justice, thus the law in fine and grace. This Moses then, in the longing for Thy advent, prayed and said, "I beseech Thee, Lord: send Whom Thou wilt send."

Exod. 4. 13.

This is the Moses, who is sent into Egypt to free the children of Israel: to whom also is likewise given the power of working signs and marvels. He wrought many things and strange, which, read or heard, excite no little wonder: but, understood mystically and duly referred to Thee: convey to pious and faithful minds a higher meaning and a more saving fruit. He led forth the children of Israel from the land of Egypt: Thou didst redeem Thine from the old life, from the slavery of the devil, from the confines of hell. He, having overwhelmed Pharaoh in the Red Sea, made them enter the land of promise: Thou, having destroyed original sin by the water of baptism, makest Thy faithful enter the kingdom of the dwelling above. He on Mount Sinai received the law of the decalogue written on tables of stone, and delivered it to the people to observe: Thou, having become the mediator of the New Testament, didst preach the law of grace to the disciples on the Mount: which also by the spirit of love Thou didst deeply impress upon their minds. He wandered forty years in the desert with the children of Israel: by many signs and wonders he was glorious in their midst; Thou, three and thirty years seen upon earth and conversing with men, didst show forth so many signs

of Thy divine power: that the world would scarcely be able to contain them, if they were all written. He acted as a faithful servant: Thou didst act as the Lord and the only Son of the Father: into Whose hands the Father gave all things. Therefore neither he can be compared with Thee: nor indeed any one of angels or men. For to all the spirit is given in measure; but to Thee remaineth power ever equal with the Father: there abideth also in Thee according to Thy human nature an excellence of singular dignity far above the other saints, communicable to no creature. "For to which of the angels hath it been said at any time, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee'"? Or which of the saints has heard the Father saying to him, "Sit thou at my right hand"? It is a great thing for an angel to be a minister: it is a great thing for any of Thy saints, to sit at table in the kingdom of Thy Father: but to Thee is given all power in Heaven and on earth. And if Thou didst appear in the substance of our mortal flesh; Thou art nevertheless above all the unchangeable God: receiving what is ours, and not losing what is Thine own. Unwaveringly therefore and boldly we confess Thee the Christ, the only-begotten of God, the Saviour of the world, and the Holy of holies promised in the law; desired by the patriarchs; foreseen and foretold by the prophets. Whose witness if a man hesitate to believe, he deprives himself of the light of truth: not keeping the base on which to set the foot of faith: nor looking to the light shining in the darksome place. For the law is a flame, and prophecy a precious lantern, leading us on to Thee the true light of the soul: in Whom they that believe are saved by faith.

Heb. 1. 5.

Ps. 109. 1.

Matt. 28. 18.

Heb. 1. 5. For without faith and the knowledge of Thy name, there is no hope of life: no gaining of salvation is possible. Thou indeed art our salvation, our hope and redemption: Whom the saints of old awaited, who had received this promise.

Figures of Christ. Moreover in many symbols, in numerous and wondrous visions also, this salvation promised of Thee existed long before and lay concealed; but, when the mystery of Thy Incarnation and Passion was fulfilled, all these hidden things were made known and accomplished. Thee therefore that

The Paschal Lamb. paschal lamb: which was ordered to be sacrificed every year in memory of the ancient deliverance from Egypt, prefigured. Thee the offering of

Sacrifice of Calves. calves and goats, Thee the incense of sweet gums: Thee the various celebration of sacrifices, and frequent sprinkling of blood, prefigured. Thou

The Golden Candlestick. art mystically symbolized in the golden candlestick adorned with seven lamps: Thou in the

Heb. 9. 5. High Priest, who once a year enters the holy of holies. But all these sacrifices of the law: Thou hast fully completed by the one sacrifice of Thy body offered once upon the cross. Now therefore there is left no profit in the observance of the former things: for what they signified Thou the eternal Truth hast made manifest to us. But they are read and, discussed according to the spirit by faithful doctors, are profitably brought forth for our edification: and their mystic meaning affords delight: but their observance in the letter is not allowed. And if formerly such sacrifices pleased Thee, this was the work of faith in a hidden mystery, which was to be made known: but now those ancient rites are ended: because the true sacrifice has now come, which with faithful devotion holy Church repeats throughout the world.

Thee also the rock springing fresh waters to the thirsty people: Thee the manna giving wondrous nourishment to the hungry: Thee the uplifted brazen serpent healing the poisoned of the bite: Thee the rod of Aaron the priest, flowering and producing nuts, beautifully foreshadowed. The rock in the desert.

Thee Joshua noble in deed and name: Thee Gideon the most victorious, Thee the most mighty Samson, Thee Samuel the most faithful prophet: Thee the illustrious virtue of each of the Nazarenes and judges wonderfully showed forth. Joshua.

Thee *David*, the king and glorious prophet, chosen according to God's heart, and exquisite psalmist evidently sings: devoutly prays, and ardently desires saying: "Lord bow down Thy heavens and descend. Stir up Thy might and come: to save us. Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy: and grant us Thy salvation. Lord, where are Thy ancient mercies: according to what Thou didst swear to David?" With these and like supplications in the psalms he often shows the desire of his bosom: but more sublime things also than these with the eyes of the heart unveiled he declares in witness to Thee. This is the holy David: to whom Thou didst make manifest the uncertain and hidden things of Thy wisdom: and promise that Thou wouldst be made flesh of his stock. This is the David comely of form, strong of hand, prudent in counsel: wise in word, mild under insults, lowly in his looks, observant of the holy law: precentor of the Gospel, true witness of Thy coming. He has most fully prophesied of Thy birth, passion, resurrection and ascension. Thou art therefore He of Whom he said: "He hath set His tabernacle in the sun: and He is as a bridegroom coming out of His bride chamber. King David. Ps. 143. 5. Ps. 79. 3. Ps. 84. 8. Ps. 88. 50. Ps. 50. 8. Ps. 18. 6, 7.

He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way: His going out is from the end of Heaven: and His circuit even to the end thereof." Thou art the
Ps. 84. 12. truth sprung out of the earth: Thou the justice looking down from Heaven: which, after the fall,
Ps. 44. 3. reconciled us to God the Father. Thou art the beautiful above the sons of men: in Whose lips grace is poured abroad: yea from Whom mercy
Ps. 73. 12. and grace have flowed to all. Thou art God our king before ages: Who hast wrought salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou art the man born in Judea: Whose name abides before the ages.
Ps. 71. 6. Thou as rain upon the fleece didst come down upon Mary: and as showers falling gently upon the earth, Thou didst sprinkle the saving doctrine
Ps. 109. 3. of the gospel. Thou, begotten of the Father before the Day-star, and clothed in the garb of our
Ps. 109. 4. mortality: remainest a priest for ever, appointed by God, according to the order of Melchisedech.
Ps. 109. 7. Thou didst drink of the torrent in the way: suffering for us as a true wayfarer the unmerited passion of death. Therefore in the day of Thy resurrection Thou didst put on strength and beauty; nor after our fashion didst Thou see the corruption of the flesh: but the self same flesh in which Thou didst suffer, Thou didst raise to life immortal: wherewith amid rejoicing angels Thou didst as-
Ps. 46. 6. cend with jubilee: to return on the last day in the sound of the trumpet. And thus have been fulfilled the faithful songs of David: written in various passages of the psalms.

Isaias. O Jesus, only desire of the prophets: Thou art
Is. 7. 14. the Emmanuel, Whom the virgin conceived, the virgin brought forth, after Whose birth she remained a virgin: of Whom *Isaias* prophesied with
Is. 9. 6, 7. luminous discourse: "A child is born to us: and

a son is given to us. And the government is upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come: the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied: and there shall be no end of peace." Thou art the root of Jesse, Who standest for an ensign of peoples; Whom the gentiles shall beseech: Whose sepulchre is seen glorious even to this day. Thou art the flower rising up out of the root of Jesse; upon Whom rests the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness: and the spirit of the fear of the Lord. Thou art the lamb, the ruler of the earth: sent from Petra of the desert to the mount of the daughter of Sion. Thou art the mountain of the house of the Lord prepared on the top of the mountains, exalted above the hills; to Whom all the nations flow: that they may receive of Thy fullness. Thou art the light of Jerusalem, and the glory of Israel: Whose rising and brightness illumine the world. Thou art the tried stone, the precious corner stone: founded in the foundation of Sion. Thou art the bud of the Lord in magnificence, and the exalted fruit of the earth: now seated at the right hand of God the Father: with princes and powers all subject to Thee. Thus Isaias, who in his great spirit saw the future: and comforted all the mourners of Sion with Thy coming. Whence also he says: "Be comforted, be comforted my people, saith the Lord your God: for I myself that spoke, I am here." O with what burning desire he longed for the fulfilment of the promise of Thy incarnation: when, full of the spirit of daring, he cried out. "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down:

Is. 11. 10.
Is. 11. 1.
Is. 16. 1.
Is. 2. 2.
Is. 60. 1.
Is. 28. 16.
Is. 4. 2.
Is. 40. 1.
Is. 52. 6.
Is. 64. 1.

the mountains would melt away at Thy presence." Who, unable to cool the heat of his desire: but seeking to make it known to all, said again: "For
Is. 62. 1. Sion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest; till her Just One come forth as brightness: and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp." And who can unfold all his mystic words: which he uttered concerning Thy glorious incarnation, Passion, triumph, and the expectation of the judgement, as also concerning the calling of the gentiles and the preaching of the holy Gospel? He relates the future as if it were present: he describes each detail: as if he had been an eyewitness of all. But in sooth he did see: yet with the eyes of the understanding, not of the flesh. For by spiritual eyes divine mysteries are beheld: which the animal man cannot perceive. Whence the Pharisees, who considered only outwardly the bodily presence in Thee: were unable to rise to the majesty of the divinity. But Isaias, enlightened from Heaven and uplifted: uttered truthful witness concerning both natures. For of
Is. 6. 1, 3. the godhead he spoke thus: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and all the earth was full of His glory." But of the human
Is. 53. 2. nature thus: "We have seen Him: and there was
Is. 53. 4. no sightliness. And we have thought Him as it were a leper: and as one struck by God and
Is. 53. 5. afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities: He was bruised for our sins."

Jeremias. Likewise also the most holy prophet Jeremias bears witness to Thee: when he describes the great
Jer. 31. 22. mystery of Thy generation thus: "For the Lord," he saith, "hath created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man." What thing so new, Lord Jesus, as Thy conception of

the Holy Ghost, Thy birth of the virgin? This is the new thing unheard of from the ages: which has not seen its like before it, nor shall have another after it. O truly blessed novelty; by which the old wickedness was driven out: and the new holiness brought in.

Hail, new mother Mary, rejoice: thou art that blessed woman, of whom this prophecy speaks: who also hast merited to be made glad by the most happy bringing forth of this new thing. For Him, Whom all creation doth not contain: thou, raised higher than all creatures, hast compassed in thy spotless womb. And although thou didst bear Him long enclosed within thy virginal womb, small and clothed in fragile members: nevertheless Jesus was a man even while not yet born: but in virtue not in body; by perfection of wisdom, not by measure of age: yea, full of grace and truth as soon as He was conceived. Understanding it therefore thus, we are convinced that this was the great mystery: foretold from the mouth of Jeremias.

Hence also in *Baruch* that memorable testimony is set: "This is our God: and there shall be no other accounted of in comparison of Him. Afterwards He was seen upon earth: and conversed with men." The prophet *Ezechiel*, who had witnessed many heavenly mysteries: this especially notes of Thee saying: "And upon the likeness of the throne, was a likeness as of the appearance of a man above upon it." And again: "And there was one man in the midst of them clothed with linen: with a writer's inkhorn at his reins." He touches also upon the wondrous mystery of Thy most holy birth: when from the eastern gate, he merited to hear the divine answer: "This gate

Baruch. Bar. 3. 36. Bar. 3. 38. Ezechiel. Ez. 1. 26. Ez. 9. 2. Ez. 44. 2.

shall be shut, it shall not be opened: and no man shall pass through it; because the God of Israel hath entered in by it: and it shall be shut for the prince." Thou art that prince: Mary also the shut gate: who, in conceiving and bearing, remained ever a maiden untouched.

Daniel. *Daniel*, the man of desires and seer of sublime secrets, when he wisely explained to king Nabuchodonosor his dream: assuredly foretells Thy
Dan. 2. 34. coming faithfully: "Thus thou sawest," saith he, "till a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof that were of iron and of clay: and it broke
Dan. 2. 35. them in pieces. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain: and filled the whole earth." Thou art symbolized by that stone: Who wast cut out of a mountain, to wit, out of the kingdom of the Jews, without hands: that is, formed of a virgin without the aid of a spouse. Who didst strike the statue in its feet: because even amid the wars of persecution Thou didst bow the state of worldly grandeur by words and signs to the obedience of faith. And thou hast become a great mountain and hast filled the whole earth: for Thou Who formerly wast known to but a few in Judea: afterwards by the bright light of the gospel grace hast revealed Thyself to the whole world.

Dan. 7. 13, 14. Another testimony the same Daniel brings forward saying: "I beheld in the vision of the night: and lo one like the Son of man came with the clouds, and He came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not

be taken away: and His kingdom, that shall not be destroyed." What more evident than this testimony; in which both Thy advents, in the flesh, and to the judgement, are clearly declared?

Michaeas gave a testimony such: that even the Scribes and Pharisees when questioned could not pass it over in silence. For when Herod asked of them, where the Christ should be born: they replied according to the words of this prophet, in Bethlehem of Juda. For so said the same blessed prophet. "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the ruler in Israel. And His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." In which words assuredly is interwoven the truth of Thy twofold birth: while one is declared an eternal going forth from the Father, the other a coming forth in time from a mother. *Habacuc* the prophet standeth upon the watch and fixeth his foot; that he may hear what is said to him concerning the future: and behold Thee upon the cross. "For as yet," he saith, "the vision is far off: and it shall appear at the end, and shall not lie. If it make any delay, wait for it: for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack." And of Thy Passion thus: "His brightness shall be as the light: horns are in His hands. There is His strength hid: death shall go before His face. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people: for salvation with Thy Christ." This one especially, more than the other prophets, expresses Thy most sweet name, which is above every name: speaking thus: "But I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus."

Michaeas. Mich. 5. 2. Habacuc. Hab. 2. 3. Hab. 3. 4, 5. Hab. 3. 13. Hab. 3. 18.

Sophonias weaves a prophecy of consolation: Sophonias.

and raises to spiritual joy the mind, wearied now
Soph. 3. 14. with long waiting: "Give praise," he saith, "O daughter of Sion, shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.
Soph. 3. 15. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in the midst of
Soph. 3. 17. thee: He will save."

Aggaeus. *Aggaeus* also foretold: "Yet one little while,
Agg. 2. 7. and I will move the heaven and the earth, and
Agg. 2. 8. the sea and the dry land: and I will move all nations: and the desired of all nations shall come."

Zacharias. *Zacharias*, with rejoicing heart and giving cer-
Zach. 2. 10. tain indications, bears witness, saying: "Sing, praise and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee."
Zach. 9. 9. And again: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion: shout for joy, O Jerusalem. Behold thy King cometh to thee, the just and Saviour: He is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." This prophecy Thou didst then fulfil: when Thou didst approach Jerusalem seated upon the back of a lowly ass. And that no man may doubt that these things were foretold of Thee: words are added that leave no room for doubt: because the experience thereof is now possessed:
Zach. 9. 10. "And He shall speak peace to the gentiles," saith he: "and His power shall be from sea to sea." The which it is clear was faithfully performed by the preachers of Thy holy gospel: who announced peace to them that were near, and to them that were afar. After this he turns to the Passion: showing that Thou wert to redeem the world by
Zach. 9. 11. Thy blood: "Thou also by the blood of Thy testament hast sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit: wherein was no water." And many other testimonies indeed the same prophet and the rest

of the prophets brought forth: of which not a few are inserted in the New Testament. Nor should it move the reader to unbelief: if he hears some testimonies rendered one way in the evangelists and another in the prophets. For the evangelists assert in brief and more clearly; as formed by a more free schooling of the Holy Ghost: that which the prophets often treated in a long discourse and obscurely.

Against the Jews.

Having heard then such great attestations of the truth: do not longer disbelieve, Jew or Gentile. Confess the incarnation of Christ; foretold by the mouth of the prophets, and fulfilled. And if thou dost not trust our writings: consult thy own books, and certainly thou shalt find it so. Only put away the understanding of the flesh, and strive not with senseless effort to defend the naked letter; seek the Spirit, and turn thy heart to the mysteries of Christ: if thou wilt have a right understanding in the holy writ. Otherwise if thou boastest in the law or the prophets outside of Christ; thy glorying is empty: and blind the understanding which thou followest. Nor shall Moses profit thee: if thou hearest not Christ, of Whom Moses wrote. Nor shall the prophets avail thee, if thou acceptest not the Lord of the prophets. In vain thou seekest to be justified by the law: since even before the giving of the law many fathers were found just. By faith Noah was called just: and Abraham believing God, even before the circumcision, received the praise of justice. Boast thee not therefore of nobility of race; nor of the virtues of thy fathers, nor of the divine words handed down to thee, full of heavenly promises: because God regards the hearts of the humble, and looks to the faith of them that rightly

believe; and therefore thou shalt be glorious, and acceptable to God: if, believing in Christ, thou follow the faith and life of the early fathers. Who assuredly hoped for merit, not from the observance of the law, nor from a multitude of victims, nor from their own deeds: but from the grace of our Saviour Jesus Christ alone. For thus God pro-
Is. 52. 3. mised by Isaias the prophet: "You were sold gratis: and you shall be redeemed without money." Come back to thy senses, Jew, come back to thy senses: and be converted to the true light of the world, Jesus Christ. He is the Lord ruler and the angel of the testament: as saith
Mal. 3, 1. Malachias. He has come to save all nations; sent especially to thee: but alack neither acknowledged nor received by many of thy children. For if thou believest that He has come, thou shalt be saved; if thou dost not believe, He shall come against thee, and thou shalt be condemned. For
Jo. 8, 24. He saith: "If you believe not that I am He: you shall die in your sin." What excuse wilt thou be able to offer in defence of thy error? Thou hast the law and the prophets; but as accusers rather than defenders: who shall stand in witness against thee, because thou wouldst not believe.
Num. 20. 10. Moses saith: "Hear ye, rebellious and incredulous.
Deut. 31. 27. While I am yet living and going in with you, you have always been rebellious against the Lord; how much more when I shall be dead?" This obduracy abides even to this day in thee, and in thy seed. When thou art converted, God shall be propitious to thee again: even as to the other nations. Be converted, be converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, O Israel: and thou shalt no longer be a reproach among the Gentiles.

For there are two things that chiefly keep thee

back in thy perfidy: love of temporal goods, and a carnal sense in the scriptures. However, lift up thy eyes round about, O Jerusalem: and see, O Israel, the number of Christ's faithful widely spread through the whole world; and blush to be found ever in error: who by believing canst gain everlasting salvation. Let not be a stumbling block to thee the multitude of them that live carelessly, who can speedily amend by doing penance: but look rather to the example of good Christians: of whom thousands, even if hidden from the eyes of men: shall never be wanting in the Church.

Cause of the perfidy of the Jews.

But now leaving aside the crowd of the Jews, turn to Christ, O my soul: for He is thy salvation and redemption. If the Jew will not believe, do thou stand in the faith: that Jesus is the Son of God, to Whom bear witness all the prophets divinely instructed and inspired. Whom if the Jews believed, they would believe also the gospel of Christ: as He said to them: "For if you did believe Moses: you would perhaps believe Me also. For he wrote of Me." But it is not wonderful if they fail to believe Him, carnal men, going after visible things only: since the law is spiritual: and admits none but a spiritual man to its understanding. But because the Lord Jesus Christ came humble, He was not known by them: although also they read of Him in the prophets coming thus. But the wretched men struck their foot against the stumbling stone and the rock of scandal: despising the lowly, and blaspheming Him that wrought things divine. Hearing this, my soul, be thou as a most prudent bee, avoiding the evil pride of the perfidious: and ever following with lowly steps the faith of the pious. Nor

Jo. 5. 46.

let it affright thee that wickedness is of many, and piety of few: since it is the sentence of the Lord,
Matt. 20. 16. that many are called, but few chosen. Nor is that question thy concern: for to God alone belongs this distinguishing. Turn thine eyes to thyself; and see what great things have been bestowed on thee by God: and be instant in what thanksgivings thou canst render for thy calling and enlightenment. Rejoice and exult with thy whole heart in God thy Saviour: Who, the Orient from on high, has deigned to visit thee. For it was all of grace, and a proof of extreme love: that He, Who could succour, willed to come thus. And if He had made Himself a debtor in promising; He did not thereby deprive Himself of the favour of liberality: for His gifts came without any preceding merits.

O truly great and venerable mystery hidden from the ages: promised by many foregoing witnesses, long expected, burningly desired: and at length shown to the world and faithfully bestowed. Few of the common people had understood this great sacrament of the incarnation; and almost only the prophets seem to have penetrated its inner meaning: to whom by the gift of a special revelation it was granted to know beforehand and write. For they as the chosen friends of God were allowed to enter the secret of so heavenly a design: so that they understood that the human race on account of the guilt of the first offence, had fallen into a misery such as could not otherwise be taken away except by the grace of a Mediator: by Whose incarnation and suffering man should receive redemption. This the ears of the people, to whom all things happened in figure: could not clearly perceive. To them it was a great

thing, if they received any gift of earthly promise; to the prophets nothing seemed great and joyous: except what savoured of the sweetness of eternal happiness. Whence one of the most sublime prophets, rising above all earthly things: showed what he loved more especially saying, "What have I in Heaven; and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart: and the God that is my portion for ever." But this love of heavenly and hope of future things all did not possess: and where the shadow and the truth differed, many did not know; until Thou, the true peace, camest down from Heaven: and didst enter, good Jesus, into the valley of this world to enlighten men. And so it was not till after it is recorded that Thou the Word wast made flesh, and not till after Thou the Creator of man didst deign to appear among men; that what long lay secretly enclosed, began to be made clear through Thee: and what was difficult of understanding, became comprehensible; and what to many seemed incredible, by Thy saving presence Thou didst make visible: and in a certain manner, if I may so speak, palpable to the hands.

Ps. 72. 25, 26.

Jo. 1. 14.

Finally some things Thou hast humbly fulfilled to the very letter: showing that they were written of Thee. But some things Thou hast not accomplished literally, but hast referred rather to the mystic sense; teaching that all the oracles of the prophets are not to be taken according to the letter: although they are always whole and entire according to the spiritual understanding. For instance, as the evangelist attests, literally that scripture was fulfilled in Thee of the paschal lamb: "You shall not break a bone thereof." But spiritually that which says, "It shall be a

Of the sense of the Scriptures.

Ex. 12. 46

Ex. 12. 9.

lamb without blemish: a male of one year." For the lamb without blemish: symbolises Thee, innocent and free from all guilt. With the plain prophecies then Thou instructest the simple unto faith: but with darker sayings Thou drawest the more acute to search deep mysteries. A plain
Ps. 21. 17, 18. prophecy is, "They have dug My hands and feet, they have numbered all My bones." A hidden:
Ps. 21. 7. "I am a worm and no man." An open prophecy is,
Jo. 19. 37. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced."
Zach. 3. 9. A mysterious is, "Upon one stone there are seven eyes." In this way also many other testimonies are found most truly foretold of Thee: which the fallacy of the Jews shall never be able to make void. For they strove to bring false witness against Thee: and their witness was not agreeing. Woe to thee, perfidious: who choosest rather to perish than to believe. Give assent to the words of truth: lest it be said to thee, which was said to the Sadducees carnally groping in the law and
Matt. 22. 29. the prophets: "You err, not knowing the scriptures: nor the power of God." For all prophecy tends to Christ: and in Christ receives fulfilment.

Nevertheless, Lord Jesus present in the flesh, Thou didst not think of the salvation only of the Jews; but also of all who were to believe in Thee, by the holy preaching of the apostles: whom Thou didst especially choose for this work. Who, although at first they were simple and unlettered men; still by Thy daily converse, and afterwards by the more generous inpouring of the Holy Ghost, as Thou didst promise them, were led into all truth: so as to grasp the fullness of the whole scripture. And their preaching is to be so much the more admired and to be given the more undoubting credit: the more truly evident it is, that they

could never have wrought such wonders of themselves: unless Thy most omnipotent hand had strengthened them; seeing that it is an extremely difficult and truly divine work: to have subdued the whole world to the holy laws of the faith.

O Wisdom of God, which camest forth from the mouth of the Most High; what great things Thou hast wrought for our salvation: that Thou mightest recall us thither, whence we fell. Thou didst send before the patriarchs and prophets: to foretell us Thy coming. Then Thou didst appoint the apostles and evangelists: to teach that all things had been accomplished. O ineffable is Thy mercy, O Lord: which has been shown forth above all that can be conceived. For Thou didst diligently seek them that knew Thee not: them that forsook Thee Thou didst not forsake; them that sinned against Thee Thou didst most lovingly forgive: to them that were turned away far from Thee, Thou didst show the way of eternal salvation. If Thou hast been so kind to Thine enemies; what wilt Thou be to Thy friends? Assuredly all in all, that nothing may be wanting to them that feast with Thee and rejoice in the kingdom of Thy Father. Amen.

Here follow Testimonies from the New Testament.

BUT now from the New Testament: a few testimonies also are to be sought. All things that I read therein: without hesitation I believe to be testimonies of Thee. And not as formerly in figures and dark

sayings: but with clear and plain words they declare Thee the Christ the Son of God.

The Angel Gabriel.

This first testifies the angel *Gabriel*, sent to the Virgin Mary, saying, "The Holy which shall be

Luke, 1. 35. born of thee: shall be called the Son of God."

The angel also speaking to the shepherds wit-

Luke, 2. 11. nesses: that this day is born to us a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.

The Three Magi.

Those most devout *Magi* also bear witness, who had come from the East to Jerusalem;

Matth. 2. 1. whence they were directed to Bethlehem: to honour with mystic gifts Him Whom they had foreseen in the star.

Simeon.

This same testifies that memorable *Simeon*, a

Luke, 2. 25. just man and fearing God: who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. For he, having received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord: by the spirit came into the temple. Taking therefore the members of Thine infant body into His arms, but recognizing the majesty within: with giving of thanks he devoutly sang,

Luke 2. 29. "Now Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord: according to Thy word in peace." Which canticle when he had ended: he said also to Thy vener-

Luke, 2. 34, 35. able Mother, "Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce: that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." O devout and sincere faith of this most blessed old man. For he adored Thee an infant: Whom the scribes and Pharisees despised working miracles. He confesses Thee true God and man: they call Thee seducer and having a devil. Wherefore he is held worthy of veneration and praise: and

they are deservedly disproved as children of perdition.

The venerable *John Baptist* also gives witness: who was sent into the world of God to bear testimony to Thee. And he cried, saying, "After me there cometh a man, Who is preferred before me: the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose." And seeing Thee walking amid men: but innocent of all stain of sin, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God: behold Who taketh away the sins of the world." He was a lamp bright and burning: but Thou the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He the herald: but Thou the judge. He the lowly servant: and Thou the Lord of all. He the friend of the bridegroom: Thou the Bridegroom of the Church. He the prophet of the Most High: Thou the only-begotten Son of God, co-eternal with God the Father. He as the morning star went before Thee preparing the way: Thou as the bright sun didst follow fulfilling all justice. Who also didst send Thy blessed apostles as rays of the sun into the whole world: to preach the light of faith unto salvation to all peoples.

John, 1. 27, 30.

John, 1. 31.

John, 1. 9.

Thou hast still another witness greater than John. For the Father testifies from Heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son: in Whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost, appearing in the shape of a dove: came down and rested upon Thee. Thou, present in the flesh, didst declare to Thy most faithful friend John more fully how great Thy glory and power: so that for the greatness of the revelation then made to him, accounting rather as ignorance the former knowledge of Thee which he had received, he said, "And I knew Him not." O man most excelling in holi-

The Heavenly Father.

Matt. 3. 17.

Jo. 1. 31.

ness, forechosen to behold the so singular and most sublime mystery of the Trinity: whose life, and death, baptism and preaching: stood forth as a most true witness of Thy coming in the flesh.

Peter. Now let the most blessed apostle *Peter* come, thy ardent lover and devout confessor of the truth; what he feels and how it behoves to believe in Thee: silencing the opinions of them that err, let
Matt. 16. 16. him plainly declare: "Thou," quoth he, "art Christ the Son of the living God." O truly apostolic confession, which flesh and blood taught not: but a heavenly revelation inspired in the son of the dove. And so from the strength of his faith he
Matt. 16. 18. merited to be called also Peter, after the rock: because leaving all things he cleaved to Thee as to a most solid rock. If one wonders that a rough fisherman was made chief of the apostolic order: let him wonder also that Moses the leader of the people and King David were first for a time shepherds of sheep. Who therefore raised Moses to a prophet,
Ps. 77. 70. and David to a king from following the ewes great with young: He and no other raised Peter, whilom a fisherman, to be head of the whole Church.

Paul. Now let *Paul* come forth, the master of the gentiles and the teacher of the world, the vessel of election, and light of the universal Church: to
Gal. 4. 4, 5. give witness to Thee: "When," saith he, "the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son made of a woman, made under the law; that He might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons." This is that most glorious Paul: to whom from Heaven
Acts, 9. 5. Thou didst say, "I am Jesus of Nazareth Whom Thou persecutest." Him of a persecutor Thou didst make a preacher, of a Pharisee an apostle; bidding him bear Thy name, which before he per-

secuted through the whole world: nor fear to carry it before the gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. Who zealously fulfilling the office of his apostolate: and traversing divers parts of the world, sounded the gospel trumpet: and the sound of Thy name came unto the boundaries of the world: through the mouth of the most glorious Paul. Now there is not in the world a church: which is not supported by the teaching of blessed Paul, under the Catholic rule. He confounded the Jews: and utterly silenced them by the authority of holy writ: asserting that Thou art the Christ the Son of God. He converted the Gentiles, taught that their idols are nothing: subdued barbarians, refuted philosophers: and brought all together to the light of faith. This is that divine Paul, who was rapt to the secrets of the third heaven: the gospel which he preached, he learnt not of man nor by man, but by Thy revelation, Christ Jesus. And so he was able to preach it with the greater confidence, and to write of it the more gloriously: as also he did: "Great is the mystery of godliness," he saith: "which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared unto angels; hath been preached unto the gentiles, is believed in the world: is taken up in glory."

Acts, 9. 15.

2 Cor. 12. 2.

Gal. 1. 1.

1 Tim. 3. 16.

Let *Andrew* also speak, the brother of Simon Peter, the most ardent lover of the cross: one of the disciples of blessed John, but afterwards following Thee, by Whom also he was chosen as an apostle: let him, I say, speak witness unto Thee, that we may hear and believe: "We have found the Messias," he saith, "Who is called Christ." O simple and constant faith: to be imitated by all Christians. For having followed Thee with a simple heart, with devout confession of the mouth

Andrew.

Jo. 1. 41.

he at once took pains to manifest to his brother Simon: the faith which he had drawn from Thee, the source of truth. And he brought him, namely Peter, to Jesus. For this is truly to have found Thee, to consult a brother's salvation: and to show him the way of heavenly life. Not thus the
Jo. 10. 24. Jews: who tempting said, "If Thou be the Christ: tell us plainly." Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees: who believed in neither the signs nor the words of Christ. Andrew, a man of no letters, hearing Christ speak once: followed Him and believed. You, knowing the law and the prophets, moreover hearing the truth from the mouth of Christ: seeing also His signs and wonders such as none other wrought: did not yet believe in Him. Wherefore you shall receive the more severe judgement; and the pious simplicity of the believers shall judge you with those who said: "There is no God: and foolish are they that serve Him."

John the Apostle. Let also speak that beloved apostle *John*: who at the supper reclined upon Thy breast,
Jo. 1. 1. Lord Jesus: "In the beginning," he saith, "was the Word; and the Word was with God: and the
Jo. 1. 14. Word was God." And further on: "And the Word was made flesh: and dwelt among us. And we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father: full of grace and
Jo. 21. 24. truth." This is that disciple: who giveth testimony of these things, and hath written these things. And we know, that his testimony is true. But O most sweet John, what is the motive of
Jo. 20. 31. this gospel narrative? "But these are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: and that believing you may have life in His name." This is the John whom Peter often took as his companion: and who with like con-

stancy resisted the princes and magistrates. Who even scourged by the same held not his peace: but for Thy name Jesus joyously bore insults and blows. Afterwards dispatched by the apostles with Peter, gladly he went into Samaria: prayed that they that believed might receive the Holy Ghost, and was heard. This is John, the theologian, the most enlightened seer and historian of the sublime Trinity: the pillar of the primitive Church, the ruler and founder of all Asia: who for God's word and the witness of Jesus cast into exile, there wrote the book of the Apocalypse, full of heavenly visions; manifesting in the beginning and in the end: that the spirit of his prophecy, is witness to Jesus. He in his epistles burning with divine love: interwove some most beautiful testimonies of the incarnation, saying, "Every spirit, which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: is of God. And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus: is not of God." 1 Jo. 4. 2, 3.

Let it please also to hear the witness of *Philip*: who finding Nathanael, saith to him, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write: Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth." For thus Thou didst still suffer Thyself to be named and deemed: before Thou didst reveal Thyself to the world. But in truth Thou art not the son of Joseph, but the son of the intact mother, the perpetual Virgin Mary; of whom Thou wast conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost: and created free from all stain of sin. Philip. Jo. 1. 45.

To this truth a more sublime testimony bears *Nathanael*, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile: and he said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel." Nathanael. Jo. 1. 47. Jo. 1. 49.

Nicodemus. If also the witness of a lawyer is sought: *Nicodemus* is here, a prince of the Jews, saying,
Jo. 3. 2. "Rabbi, we know, that Thou art come a teacher from God. For no man can do these signs which Thou dost: unless God be with him."

Now then weigh, O Jews, and see how many witnesses hath Christ: Whom you have not feared
Luke, 23. 42. to deny. If you still require more, the faith of the thief will reprove you, and the confession of the centurion: of whom each acknowledged Christ; the former, as He hung upon the cross: the latter, when He expired with a great cry, who
Matt. 27. 54. said, "Indeed this was the son of God." False therefore is your objection: which you brought
Jo. 8. 13. against Christ saying, "Thou givest testimony of Thyself: Thy testimony is not true." For indeed witnesses are not wanting to Christ, either in the Old or in the New Testament: if you are willing to accept them. But because charity is wanting to you, and you have not the word of God abiding in you: therefore no authority is able to convince you.

What is there between me and these Jews?
Cor. 6. 15. what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? Not more than the fellowship that light hath to darkness. Nevertheless while their manifest error is demonstrated: our faith in Thee, Lord Jesus, is the more strongly established. Their foolish questioning is profitable to me, as a warning: but much more profitable unto truth is Thy most sweet response. Thou didst say therefore to
Jo. 8. 17. them, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness: but shall have the light of life." Willingly I listen to the prophets speaking of Thee: but more sweetly the word from Thy mouth falls upon my ear. Pleasing

is the witness of the prophets: but with greater pleasure I receive the witness uttered by Thee. For if the testimony of man is received; the testimony of God is greater, for Thou art the truth, which does not deceive: the wisdom, which knows all things. However, to strengthen our weakness Thou didst use the prophets; who were of advantage to us, not to Thee: as also Thou didst answer certain men. "This voice came not because of Me: but for your sakes." I rejoice then, most loving Jesus, in all things that the prophets have spoken: I exult also in those which the apostles and evangelists have delivered to us. Of all whom, the faith was one, the spirit one: and the understanding in the greatest accord. For the Holy Ghost filled their hearts: that they might grasp the secret things both of the past and the future. Which when I read or hear; I embrace with all devotion: and am inflamed in the love of Thy name although an unworthy sinner. The sayings of the prophets help me: their visions and heavenly colloquies. The writings of the evangelists profit me: and the physical beholding, hearing and touch of the disciples conversing with Thee. For me they saw who were worthy: for me they heard, that were to narrate: for me they touched, that were to strengthen me in the faith. Jo. 12. 30.

In after times the most glorious martyrs give the strongest testimony to Thee. For these not only with the confession of the mouth; but also by the pouring out of their precious blood bore witness: whom neither the bitterness of pain, nor the softness of luxuries, could in any way turn from the true faith. The Martyrs.

Saint *Stephen*, the first martyr, bears this wit- Stephen.

Acts, 7. 55. ness. "Behold I see the heavens opened: and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Laurence. Blessed *Laurence* the martyr, when he was in torments: spake these words, "O Lord Jesus Christ, God of God, have pity on me Thy servant; for charged, I denied not Thy name: questioned I confessed Thee the Lord."

Vincent. Blessed *Vincent*, deacon and great-souled martyr, although he was racked in his whole body: was not however broken in spirit: but with a loud voice boldly cried. "This is the glory of the Christian name. The servant of Christ, I am ready for all things."

Ignatius. Saint *Ignatius*, disciple of blessed John the apostle, scourged with leaden thongs, torn with hooks, and given over to living coals, rendered great witness to the faith: and how in his heart love had burned as strong as death: he showed by his fervent answer, saying, "Neither burning fire, nor boiling water: will be able to put out charity in me, Lord Jesus." O noble martyr: whose constancy moved the Emperor Trajan to admiration: "Which of the Greeks," he said, "would bear as much for his god?" Ah, how greatly he is worthy to be venerated, and everywhere attended with devout heralding of praise: who amid so many species of torments, we read, never gave over calling upon Thy most sweet name, Lord Jesus. Questioned thereupon he replied, "I HAVE THIS NAME WRITTEN ON MY HEART: and therefore I CANNOT CEASE FROM NAMING IT"; and afterwards, when taken from his body, and divided through the centre: it was found to have JESUS CHRIST inscribed in letters of gold. O good Jesus how lovable and pleasant is Thy name: in the heart

of them that love Thee. O how supremely necessary also is the frequent invocation of Thy honied name to me dwelling amid so many divers temptations. Deign therefore, Lord Jesus, to write Thy most sweet name as a perpetual memorial upon my heart; and enkindle it with so mighty a zeal of charity, that neither sad things nor joyous may avail to separate me from Thy love.

The Confessors.

The venerable confessors also and doctors, in their actions and teachings, bear many praiseworthy testimonies to Thee. For these are they that set themselves as a wall for the Church: and uttered most vigorous warnings against the guiles of heretics.

Of these is the glorious Jerome priest, the noble doctor Ambrose; the most blessed prelate Augustine, the most sweet Pope Gregory: the venerable Bede, the most devout Bernard, and the others of the same kind, honourable and famous men; strong in deed, eloquent in word, catholic in faith, rich in knowledge, edifying themselves and others most numerous: and leaving their posterity a worthy monument of divine learning.

Jerome.

For said the glorious father *Jerome*: when, approaching his end, he was about to receive Holy Communion: "Thou art He, Who, although Thou wert the only God before all time and begotten of God the Father without beginning by an eternal and unsearchable generation, didst shut Thyself up made man within the small body of one maiden, that is the glorious Virgin. For thus in the virgin's womb Thou didst assume human nature: that Thou art neither God without being man, nor man without being God. Thou art truly the life by which every creature liveth:

and without which it dies. Thou art the living life sweet and lovable and pleasant. The sweetness of Thine odour refreshes the weak and ailing: whom the taste of Thee renders healthy and most strong."

Ambrose. Saith the poet-orator *Ambrose*: "O wondrous condescension of Thy love towards us. O inestimable love of charity: to redeem the slave, Thou hast given up the Son."

Augustine. Saith the most learned of doctors *Augustine*: "Our Redeemer and Creator, the Son of God, existing before the ages, was made the son of man at the end of time; that He, Who had created us by the power of His divinity to enjoy the blessedness of everlasting life: the same by the weakness of our humanity might restore us to recover the life which we lost." This is that sublime, contemplative Augustine; whose heart the love of Christ had so wounded, that he bore His words in his breast as sharp arrows: who in the beginning of his conversion could not be sated pondering with wondrous sweetness the sublimity of the divine plan, concerning the salvation of the human race. Whence also, inflamed with the desire of divine knowledge, while he sought above himself the immutable truth: he burst forth into this cry of exultation. "O eternal truth, both true love and loved eternity: Thou art my God: to Thee I sigh day and night."

Gregory. Saith the most noble Pope *Gregory*: "The mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, came among men to show a simple example of life to men: He was upright, so that He might crush the evil spirits; He feared God, so that He might overcome pride: He avoided evil, so that He might wash away uncleanness of life in His

elect." *The same*: "O how great is the mercy of our Creator. We are not worthy slaves: and we are called friends."

Origen. "The only-begotten Son of God, Who was ineffably born of the Father alone before the ages: now at the approach of the end of time by the will of the Father and the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, came in a human body to the midst of men." Origen.

Isidore. "God seeing that the world, even when warned, would not confess its errors: sent His only begotten Son to take flesh and to appear to men: and heal sinners." Isidore.

Pope Leo. "The Son of God enters these weak things of the world, coming down from the heavenly abode, and leaving not the Father's glory: in a new manner generated by a new birth. In a new manner: because invisible in His own, He was made visible in ours. The incomprehensible willed to be grasped: abiding before time, He commenced to be in time." Pope Leo.

Maximus Bishop. "The Saviour of the world took a time of birth through His mother: Who has no time of birth from the Father. The dweller of Heaven came to the earth: to call the inhabitants of the earth to Heaven. The Word was made flesh, not that God should be emptied into man: but that man should be glorified into God." Maximus.

Fulgentius Bishop. "Christ, the Son of God, true God of true God, and one with the Father by nature God: always nourishes the holy angels from Himself: but nevertheless the Son of God took not the nature of an angel. But that God might prove His love in us: His Son took our nature from us: and so the only begotten God, Who is the bread of the angels, that He might Fulgentius.

make Himself bread also for man: received together both the soul and the flesh of man. He received both real, both holy: both spotless. He took our soul without wickedness; He took our flesh with mortality: that dying therein, He might overcome death. He took a just soul: whereby to restore justice to our souls."

Chrysostom. *Chrysostom.* "Christ came to take upon Himself our weaknesses, and to bestow upon us His strength: to seek human things, to work divine: to accept insults, to confer dignities: to bear weariness, to restore health. He bore these necessities: that He might be proved a true man by human actions."

Bede. Jo. 1. 14. *Bede.* "The Word was made flesh, that is, God was made man, and dwelt among us; that by the appearance of a man known to us He might be on a level with us in His daily actions, instruct us by His words, show us the way of life by His life, fight for us against the enemy: destroy our death by His death and resurrection."

Bernard. *Bernard.* "The only begotten of God, the sun of justice, as a taper of immense and glorious flame, was lighted to illumine the prison of this world; that every man, who wishes to be enlightened, may approach Him and be united with Him: so that there be no medium between Him and himself."

The same. "I deem that this was the motive of the invisible God, wherefore He willed to be made visible in the flesh and converse with men; namely that He MIGHT DRAW ALL THE AFFECTIONS OF CARNAL MEN, WHO WERE UNABLE TO LOVE EXCEPT OF THE FLESH TO THE SAVING LOVE OF His FLESH FIRST: and so lead them by degrees to a spiritual love."

A most noble testimony to Thee also render *Mary* and *Martha*, sisters of Lazarus: who with single devotion cleaved to Thee living in the flesh.

This *Mary* is the most devout washer of Thy feet; to cleanse which she brought not exterior waters, but the tears of her own contrite heart: to wipe which she loosed her hair; to kiss which she gave her lips: to anoint which she exercised hands and arms. Indeed she turned to uses of piety everything: that formerly she had stained with the vanity of the world. O happy sorrow of this woman: which is immediately followed by the forgiveness of all her sins. For, she who had come fearful: returned in peace, free. She is more just than the Pharisee, more faithful than Simon the leper: for he doubts, she believes; he blames, she reverences and loves. He makes show of a false justice: she everywhere manifests true humility. She is Thy most pleasing and familiar friend; who after many services of kindness: also merited to be the witness, and the first messenger of Thy resurrection. Mary Magdalene. Luke, 7. 38.

And *Martha* her sister, busy about much serving: renders Thee a testimony of perfect faith: "I have believed," saith she, "that Thou art Christ the Son of God Who art come into this world." This is that dear hostess of Thine, who with honour often received Thee into her home in Thy bodily presence; but within the home of her mind made ready a more pleasing dwelling-place: where Thou didst spiritually recline in the joyous concord of faith, hope and charity. Martha. Luke, 10. 40. Jo. 11. 27.

Rivalling her perfect faith also a certain woman from the crowd: with sublime voice cried: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee: and the paps that gave Thee suck." This woman is recog- Luke, 11. 27.

nized to have been possessed of great faith and devotion: who while Scribes and Pharisees blaspheme Thee, with such sincerity confesses the mystery of Thy incarnation.

The Virgins. Witness also to Thee bear the holy virgins: of whom Thou hast deigned to become the spouse and comforter.

Agatha. Blessed *Agatha*, a modest maiden and noble of race, said, "My mind is strengthened: and established in Christ." This is she that went to prison for Thy name most joyously and exultantly. After the torture and the cutting away of her breasts, she sought no earthly remedy; but "I have my Lord Jesus Christ: Who by a word alone restores all things."

Lucy. *Lucy*, a devout maiden, making ready for Thee a pleasing dwelling in her virginity: showed the great force of her faith, saying, "For three years I have sacrificed to the living God: now since nothing is left over: I shall offer myself a living victim in sacrifice to God." And when she was given over to the fire: she subdued the power of the flame by prayer, saying, "I have asked my Lord Jesus Christ: that this fire have not power over me."

Agnes. *Agnes*, a most blessed maiden, Thy especial and beloved spouse: bears Thee so manifest a testimony: that all that she said seems to have been not a human but a divine utterance. What this noble little virgin pronounced concerning faith and chastity, the love and beauty of her Spouse: surpasses nature and her years: "I," saith she, "love Christ, into Whose bridal-chamber I have entered: Whose mother is a virgin: Whose Father knows not woman. To Him alone I keep my troth: with all devotedness I commit

myself to Him, Whom angels serve: at Whose beauty the sun and moon marvel." And she gloried, as was entirely befitting, saying, "With His ring my Lord Jesus Christ hath espoused me: and as a spouse He hath adorned me with a crown."

Cecilia, a most glorious virgin, bearing the gospel words in her breast, and desiring to please Thee only, gave her mind to no amusement or vanity: but intent upon fastings and prayer, sang in her heart, saying, "May my heart and my body be made spotless, O Lord: that I be not shamed." And questioned of her faith: with great constancy she answered, "We knowing the holy name: are utterly unable to deny it." Cecilia.

Likewise also the other holy virgins, *Catharine*, *Barbara*, *Ursula* and *Christina*, constant in faith, fervent in the love of Thee: treading under foot the blandishments of the flesh, loving angelic purity, overcame their sex together with the world: and merited an undying name in Heaven. Catharine, Barbara, Ursula, Christina.

The very elements which Thou didst establish: bear witness also to Thee. It was indeed befitting, that the irrational creatures also should acknowledge their Creator: and show forth by wondrous signs Him: Whom they could not announce with words. For to Thee as to its Creator: all creation was bound to pay service. Offering therefore an obedience of unwonted strangeness: by deeds it showed beyond doubt that it knew its Lord. For the *heavens* knew that Thou art the Lord of the heavens: for they immediately sent forth a star as a sign of Thy birth. The *earth* knew: for at the voice of Thy cry it rendered up Lazarus four days dead: but also in Thy Passion it was moved and quaked. The *sea* knew: for it offered a solid road to Thy feet: and made a wondrous The elements. The heavens, Matt. 2. 2, 9, 10. The earth, Jo. 11. 39. Matt. 27. 51. The sea, Jo. 6. 19.

The air, Matt. 8. 6.

The sun, Luke, 23. 45.

The rocks and stones, Matt. 27. 51.

The clouds, Acts, 1. 9.

path to Thee for Peter. The air knew: for at Thy command at once it ceased from fierce gales. The *sun* also knew: for at the time of the Passion it withdrew the rays of its light: lest it should behold dying Him, Whom it understood to be the author of its splendour. The *rocks* and *stones* knew: since at the same hour they were rent for compassion. The *clouds* knew: for they received Thee ascending into Heaven. Since therefore all these elements proclaim that their Lord and God is come in the flesh: be not thou, O man, a rational creature, doubtful or slothful unto confessing the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, wrought chiefly for thy salvation: full of divine miracles, confirmed on all sides by scripture testimonies: lest perchance thou become more insensible than senseless things, or more stolid than the beasts of burden: as against the perfidy of the Jews, the

Is. 1. 3. Lord thunders by Isaias, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known Me: My people hath not understood." But now having briefly examined these things, let infinite thanks and praises be to Thee,

Phil. 2. 9, 10. O Lord Jesus Christ: and in Thy name let every knee bow of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and let every tongue confess, that Thou art in the glory of God the Father.

HERE ENDETH THE MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF HOLY WRIT OF THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

A Prayer to greet Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, King of the holy angels, Whom all the powers of Heaven obey, Whom the cherubim and seraphim adore, praise, and bless for ever and ever.

Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, true Messias and Saint of saints, sent from the citadel of the Father into this world, Whom all the holy ones from the beginning awaited, Whom the Patriarchs with great longing desired to behold, Whose coming the prophets with divers heraldings chanted. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, Creator and Redeemer of the human race, Whom the apostles and evangelists preached to the world, and taught to be the true Son of God incarnate for us, slain and risen from the dead; and, resplendent with glorious signs and wonders, they planted the holy Church throughout the world. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, most mighty warrior, and most faithful helper of the saints, Whom the noble martyrs, despising the pleasures of this world, despising also the sufferings of their own body, have followed in the agony of the blessed Passion, and for the witness of faith with constancy have given themselves up to death. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, supreme priest and true Pontiff, and eternal shepherd, Whom priests and levites, doctors and confessors have glorified by their life, knowledge and virtues, Whom monks and hermits, going through a hard and straitened life, have loved with whole-souled devotedness. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of virgins, comfort of widows, hope of orphans, refuge of the destitute, relief of the sorrowful, eternal salvation of believers, and most wide gate to all them that

come to Thee, Whom with a special beauty of chastity an innumerable band of virgins follow, bearing the spotless halo of their integrity. Hail, Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world, fount of life, paradise of the soul, joy of the heart, giver of grace, restorer of innocence, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, Whom to know is to live, Whom to serve is to reign, Whom once to have seen is to have learnt all things, on Whom the angels long to gaze, and are sated gazing with ever fresh desire. To Thee be praise, to Thee glory, to Thee giving of thanks, with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.

A Prayer to Christ, Who is the true Light, Way, Truth and Life.

Lord Jesus Christ, true light, eternal and unchangeable, Who to enlighten the darkness of man's ignorance, didst deign to come down into the prison of this world, to show us the way to the fatherland of everlasting brightness, where with the holy angels Thou art ever present and givest light unfailingly, listen to the prayers of my lowliness, and pour into my heart with gracious generosity that godly light, which Thou didst preach to the world, and command to be preached to all nations through the earth, that I may know Thy way in the land of my pilgrimage, so that leaving the vanity of the world and casting aside the cares of the flesh I may follow Thee my Creator and Redeemer with the steps of love unto the end of my life in all poverty and humility, in patience and longsuffering, in faith, hope and

charity, in sobriety, in chastity and perfect obedience. For Thou art the mirror of life and the light of all holiness, Who didst go before me in the way of virtue, that Thou mightest bring me back to the knowledge of truth, enveloped as I was in many errors and sins. Thou didst set Thyself before me as an example of living, so that if I wearied of following any one of Thy saints, at least I might not be slothful to follow Thee my God. And that I might not deem this impossible, Thou didst leave me many thousand examples of saints, who have eagerly followed Thy footsteps.

Give me therefore, most loving Jesus, the fervour of Thy spirit, enkindle in me the fire which Thou camest to send upon earth, that I may despise all these lower things, and desire to live to Thee alone, study to please Thee only, and for Thy love fear not to be contemned and neglected by men. Be Thou my joy, the sweetness of my soul, live with me and I with Thee, shutting out the whole world. Be my teacher and my master, my learning and my wisdom. Following Thee I cannot go astray; looking upon Thee, I will make no account of the words of them that would draw me back. May every toil for Thee seem small to me, every misfortune light, may every burden become bearable. May Thy love work this for me, which helpeth to overcome all things, may also humility of heart follow, which, accomplishing all, deems that it has done nothing worthy. Thou art my expectation and the fulfilment of my desire, Thou my recreation and the enlightenment of my heart, Who never forsakest them that hope in Thee, although Thou suffer them to be tempted for a while, that they may know themselves better and be mindful that without Thee they can do

nothing. O only beloved Jesus, abandon me not without consolation in the exile of this world, but do with me as Thou hast said and promised, to go and come again to me in due time, until, when the strife of the trial is over, Thou takest me to Thyself into eternal glory. In which Thou livest and reignest God for all ages of ages. Amen.

SERMONS OF THE LIFE AND PASSION OF
OUR LORD, TO WIT, FROM THE
ADVENT OF OUR LORD

SERMONS OF THE LIFE AND PASSION OF OUR LORD

I

Of the desire of the Prophets and of devout preparation for the Coming of Christ.

BEHOLD *the desired of all nations shall come.* Give heed and listen, all ye faithful and devout: to what the books of the prophets say of Christ. For it is becoming now in the so holy time of the Lord's Advent: to call to mind more particularly the prophecies that concern the incarnation of Jesus Christ. For therefore are the writings of the holy prophets concerning Christ daily cited to us in public: namely that hearing the voice of the fathers who have gone before, the whole affection of our heart may be more and more enkindled in the love of the Word Incarnate. O with what desire the holy patriarchs and prophets burned of old: concerning only the promise of what was to come. It is matter of great shame to Agg. 2. 8.

us, if now we are inflamed with less desire towards the presence of Christ shown us in the flesh: when they were so ardent towards the memory only of the Word to be made flesh.

Jo. 8. 56. Abraham, the father of all the faithful, rejoiced that he might see the day of Christ, Who, as he had foreseen in the spirit, would be born of his stock, and he rejoiced with no little joy: because of the certain hope which he had received of the Christ to be born. And so also frequently desired the same many other saints of old, who foreknew this by the spirit; longing for the speedy fulfilment of so great a mystery: while we now rejoice that it is accomplished. Which the Lord showed clearly enough: when present in the flesh He said to His

Luke 10. 24. disciples, "Many kings and prophets have desired to see the things that you see: and have not seen them." Little love therefore he seems to have towards Christ, whoever does not reflect, in the love of his soul, how divine a mystery it is, how great a gift bestowed on man: that Christ willed to be made flesh. However the loving Lord is wont freely to bestow the grace of devotion ON THEM THAT MEDITATE UPON HIM, WHO CAME INTO THIS WORLD TO GIVE BLESSING: FOR CHRIST IS NOT WITHOUT UNCTION: NOR IS JESUS CONTEMPLATED WITHOUT SWEETNESS. Nor can it be doubted that much far-reaching, vast and beautiful matter of holy meditation occurs to earnest minds, which is hidden and remote for the slothful and careless: because they are not worthy to understand the mysteries of Christ: who do not seek them with humility and desire. Hence He Himself saith to

Luke, 8. 10. the disciples, "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables."

But the love of Jesus mightily draws His lovers to ruminate on the honied words that flow from His mouth, and to ponder His divine works wrought in the flesh: to weigh which worthily, no times or moments suffice. To such it is customary in whatever their needs and concerns to have recourse to their most beloved friend and consoler, Jesus; because He is the source of all graces and virtues: Who by a mere word and one only nod is able to reform all that is ill-ordered. And in divers ways they receive comfort from Him; and sometimes they merit very great illuminings of mind: who thus devotely and HUMBLY fly to Him. And the more intimately they turn themselves towards Him: so much the more sublime raptures of spirit do they enjoy, when visited by Him. Great pains therefore should be taken on these days of devotion, and some wholesome thought from the law or the prophets should be constantly turned over in the heart: concerning the desire of the ancient fathers, concerning the depth of the heavenly mysteries, concerning the revelation of the things to come: but more fully concerning the accomplishment of all the promises.

Frequently also and earnestly must we pray, that our affection may be drawn inwardly to Christ: and the understanding of spiritual things be opened to us with the prophets. For thus shall we be able to make progress in the knowledge, and increase more fully in the virtues of the Son of God: Who for our salvation deigned to be made man. What excuse wilt thou be able to offer, my soul; if thou neglectest to ponder so great a grace? What, I say, wilt thou answer Christ in the time to come; if thou hast not been grateful

for the so great benefits, wherewith He has honoured thee in preference to so many peoples and tongues. For how many there have been who have not known Christ: and have not heard of Him, how many also who have despised Him and refused to believe. But to thee it has been given not only to believe and hear: but also to read and understand what things have been written and prophesied concerning Christ. Be thankful therefore to God for the bestowal of such blessings: and diligent in the study of the works of God. Without doubt all is full of spirit and truth; all full of love and sweetness: whatever is written or chanted concerning Christ. There is no lack of matter to exercise devotion: nor of time for sacred meditation. For the books are open, and the discourses of the saints numerous: and all things have been well arranged by the fathers in the celebration of the divine offices. What cause therefore hast thou to say, I am not able to meditate well; seeing that so much has been prepared for the consolation of all the faithful? This winter time also is fully suitable for the exercise of devotion: and for acquiring union with the Lord. For though it be cold: still the fire of internal love cannot be hindered, or extinguished. But the nights also longer than wont, give opportunity for longer praying and chanting: so also the bitterness of the storms, the violence and cold of the winds take away occasion of wandering abroad. For all things appear now to say: let each abide with himself: and busy himself only with Jesus day and night. Let no man therefore go outside the door of his tent, for the season does not suffer: but let him observe the sabbath of the soul: and prepare within him-

self for the Lord the place of a most beautiful dwelling. For the more the outward senses are restrained and collected; so much the more the spirit is free within: and capable of contemplating things divine. And now there seems to remain nothing more, save the grace and power of the Holy Ghost: without which our life is utterly poor: and all man's diligence of no avail. But if it be present, it quickly bears away to higher things: and suffices the lover, even if he knows not letters. To him however that knows letters, the Spirit is necessary: for without the spirit the letter is void: as also all prayers are lacking in savour.

Strive therefore after greater devotion in the so holy time of the Advent of the Lord. But especially from that day on which is chanted "O sapientia," on the feast of the blessed Lucy, virgin: then the heart and soul are to be raised with greater affection towards Christ: for He it is Whom holy mother Church desires to come. For this exclamation betokens the unbounded desire of the holy prophets: as also the affection of every faithful soul longing for the coming of Christ. As if amid her ardent prayers she were to say, "O good most loving Jesus, true and eternal wisdom of the Father, Who didst wonderfully create us: come now and, as Thou hast ordained, even more wonderfully save us, fallen. Come to visit us in the prison of flesh, being born free from the malady of the flesh; that Thy elect may be delivered, whom the weight of sin burdens: and the fear of death heavily oppresses. Come to enlighten the darkness of the world, and purify darkened consciences; so that freed from the chains of sin, we may rejoice in Thy com-

passion: and raised by Thy grace, be comforted by the hope of good things eternal. Through Thee, Christ Jesus, true light of the soul: born of the Father before the ages. Amen."

II

Of meeting and welcoming the Heavenly King

Matt. 21. 5. *ELL ye the daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh to thee, meek.* Of old God, speaking to the fathers and prophets, sent before many witnesses of His incarnation: and now in almost the same words He proclaims the time of His coming to every faithful soul. "Tell ye," He saith, "the daughter of Sion, ye that are spiritual and have the spirit of prophecy; or ye that have read the
Matt. 21. 42. prophets and know the scriptures: tell ye, I say, the soul awaiting and much desiring My coming; to open the eyes of her faith: and know that I am immediately at hand. For I seek such a soul that longs to see Me: and frequently thinks of Me. Her I bid and bid again to slumber not for weariness: but to awake, arise and await. Let her then also pray and read My letters addressed to her from Heaven: let her look into them often: and until I come refresh herself in them, and comfort herself manfully; nor desist from praying and
Hab. 2. 3. desiring: for I will surely come and I will not be slack. I lengthened out a truly long period of delay, I willed not to come hastily: but I made go before many and magnificent heralds; often by them I sent word and message in order to arouse desire, and increase the rejoicing over My advent.

For when a great monarch approaches any place: he should be received with great eagerness.

"Who therefore eagerly desires Me: he shall the more rejoice in My presence when I come. But who is given over to the world: he cannot desire Me. Who again despises all worldly consolation, and, fleeing from distractions of the heart, recollects himself interiorly, desiring eternal things, rejecting present: he prays to hasten the day of My visitation and the hour of the coming of the Saint of saints, the glorious presence also of the heavenly King, saying, 'Come, Lord, visit me in peace: that I may joy before Thee with a perfect heart. Come, desire of my heart: light of my eyes and peace. Thou art my hope, the expectation of Israel. In Thee have I hoped, shame me not of my hope: because unto Thee with desire have I lifted up my soul.' To such a soul desiring thus, and seeking Me from day to day I will speedily appear: and make Myself manifest. For I am the Lord her God: Who have spoken in the prophets. And even till now I speak to all: but nevertheless in a special manner to my faithful friends; and in a very special manner to him who beyond others more eagerly longs for Me: and more reverently desires to receive Me and bring Me into his house. And now I am nigh, saith the Lord; now My time is accomplished: I will not longer delay. I will fulfil the word which I have spoken; I will make good my promise: I will not put off the desire of the soul; what she hath sought shall be, what she hath desired shall come to pass: for I Myself Who speak, behold I am here." Rejoice and be glad, faithful soul: for the King cometh to thee from Heaven. He is the Lord thy God, thy Creator and Redeemer; long

awaited, ardently desired: and now ready to come
Matt. 21. 5. to thee. "Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh." Behold the Heaven, whence He cometh forth: behold the world, into which He entereth.

Behold a law of fire in His right hand: in His left riches and glory. Behold round about Him angels and archangels; before Him prophets, near Him apostles: after Him innumerable choirs of saints.

Behold how great is He Who enters: Whom the dominations haste to meet: and all the powers of Heaven serve. Behold He cometh, a compassionate and mild, poor and HUMBLE KING in human nature: Who is to judge the world in justice. BLESSED THE EYES THAT SEE THESE THINGS, and PONDER on the works of the eternal King TO THEIR OWN EDIFICATION; for THEREIN THEY SHALL NOT SEE THE POMP OF THE WORLD: but all humility and meekness shall they find in the coming of so great a King. Blessed all who have eyes of spiritual understanding: and in the light of faith see the light of eternal Truth. This visible world is seen with the eyes of the flesh even by infidels and pagans; but the invisible CREATOR of the world Himself is beheld with the eyes of the mind by ALL the faithful of Christ: WHO LOVE CHRIST FROM THEIR INMOST HEART. For TO BELIEVE in Christ, IS TO BEHOLD HIM WITH THE MIND, and ARDENTLY TO LOVE HIM, IS TO POSSESS HIM. For thus the holy patriarchs and ancient prophets saw him; who foretold His advent long before: and prophesied many things concerning Him.

For the prophets of old were named seers: because Whom others knew not they foresaw: and by their words and writings strove to make

known to others who knew not. Thus likewise we also see Christ, who after His incarnation have come to the faith; because all things that we read or hear of Him, we firmly hold in our soul: and confess, praise and proclaim truly foretold by the prophets, and mightily confirmed by the apostles. Blessed therefore the eyes of those who, although they have not seen Christ in the flesh, nevertheless faithfully believe in Him; devoutly venerate, chastely love: and ardently desire to receive Him. John, 20. 29.

Behold our King comes from Heaven; let us joyously go forth to meet Him: and welcome Him with devout embraces. Let the heavens rejoice, to wit, sublime contemplatives; let the earth exult, to wit, simple ones given to the active life, before the face of the Lord because He cometh: for He comes to save us and to give Himself to us. SHOUT PRAISE, YE MOUNTAINS; and ye learned, distil THE SWEETNESS of the word: and let the hills flow WITH MILK AND HONEY UNTO THE SPIRITUAL COMFORT OF US ALL. Give voice on the trumpet in Sion: let all the torpid be aroused, all the dispersed gathered together into one; let the weak be strengthened, the sad comforted, the sick raised: let all assemble, let each hasten from his place; for a great day in Israel: the holy day of the Lord, the feast day of the eternal King hath arrived. Rejoice, Jerusalem, and make a gathering, all ye faithful that love Jesus Christ, the joy of all that love Him; for He shall not appear in tumult, nor in outward pomp: but in the spirit of gentleness and mildness you shall see Him from within. Let all peoples, tribes and tongues then rejoice and prepare: but do thou, devout soul, daughter of Sion, whose whole aim is

fixed upon God, do thou, I say, exult the more. For to thee through the prophet is word sent by the Lord, to thee especially is the message given; thou art called AS A FRIEND BY NAME: that thou mayest hear and see what manner of one is He Who is about to come to thee. Behold thy King, He cometh to thee. Behold thy King: not earthly, not of time, not mortal: but heavenly, eternal, and immortal. Behold He cometh, not to reign in the world; but to save the world: by His blood. Behold thy King, not the king of Romans or Francs: but the King of kings and the Lord of all lords. By Him kings reign in the world: and without Him none shall be crowned in Heaven. He is the King of Heaven: and He cometh not to receive the earth: but to give the kingdom of Heaven. Who is willing to serve Him, him He shall make to reign with Him; and whosoever neglects to obey Him: shall be shut out from His Kingdom. Behold thy King, Whom thou desirest, Whom thou lovest: in Whom thou believest, in Whom thou hopest. He is indeed in general King to all creatures; but to thee in particular by love: as thy own spouse and familiar friend. Thine I say; because for thee He is more fully occupied with care, for thee more watchfully intent; towards thee more lovingly inclined, with thee more closely united: so that thou canst say in
Ps. 5. 3. truth: "My King and my God." For from eternity He has loved thee: and now to deliver and save thee, He has come from Heaven from the Royal dwellings. IN WHOM IF THOU WILT GLORY: I KNOW NOT HOW THOU CANST BE SADDENED OR DISCOURAGED. For He is the King and Ruler of all: and what things He hath made with power, He governs with the utmost wisdom: so that deservedly He

should be named King and Lord of all: and nevertheless thine by the special favour of His gifts. On Him depend Heaven and earth: and all creation is ruled by His sway. None can resist His power: by His wisdom all things are ordered. His wisdom and power are with Him; and He made all things: and there is no end of His greatness. O how high and immense is He beyond all kings and princes: of Whom the prophet says in the psalm, "But God is our King before ages: He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth." Behold He cometh. He cometh not in gold and silver, nor clothed in purple and fine linen; not in caparisoned horses, nor resplendent arms, not in the blare of the bugle and lute: but in lowliness and poverty, in mildness and charity: that He may be loved rather than feared: that He may draw sinners to Him, not drive them away. Ps. 73. 12.

But wherefore did He come? He came for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us: that He might redeem whom He knew to be lost. He came because of thy need and faultiness: which was exceedingly manifold and great. He came to free thee from sins: and to cleanse by the outpouring of His precious blood. He came to enlighten thy ignorance: and to show the way of truth. He came to aid thy weakness: and to teach endurance in adversity. He came to call away from desire of earthly things: and to raise to love of heavenly. He came to preach virtue: and to put an end to vice. He came to pour in grace: and to make glad with the sweetness of heavenly consolations. HE CAME TO FILL THEE WITH ALL GOOD THINGS: AND TO DELIVER THEE FROM ALL EVILS. He came to bestow on thee ever- Eph. 2. 4.

lasting bliss: and to bear the misery of time for thee. He came to give thee all that is His: and above all gifts to offer Himself to thee to be enjoyed for ever.

For that thou mightest eternally rejoice: He Himself came to accept toil and sorrow. That thou mightest be made rich: He came to be made poor. That thou mightest reign: He came to live in exile. He came, the way to the wanderer; truth to the ignorant, life to the dead: light to the blind, the physician to the sick; the comforter to the desolate, the deliverer to the condemned: the counsellor to the seduced, the saviour to the despairing. Behold wherefore He came: and how much He brought thee by His saving coming. He sent not an angel, nor archangel, nor patriarch, nor prophet; but He came Himself, the King of angels, and the Lord of prophets, to deliver thee: for He is the Lord thy God Who made thee. And indeed all the kings and prophets, who were before Him, could not free anyone from the hand of death, nor bring to eternal life; but this King, most powerful and glorious for ever, shall deliver His people from the hand of death: destroy the chains of hell, and lead His elect into paradise.

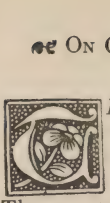
O if thou wouldst well understand and carefully observe of what and how great majesty is this King of glory: thou wouldst certainly lift up the gates of thy heart most lovingly, and bring in to thee the King of everlasting glory: for with greatest exultation, with immense honour and solemn preparation it is befitting to receive such and so great a King. For if any earthly king had sent word to thee, or one of his princes, "Tomorrow I will come to thee, prepare me a cham-

ber, I wish to make a stay with thee"; what care wouldst thou have, dost thou think, and what wonder thou wouldst express? Behold now the King of Heaven, speaking by the prophet, sends word to thee, "Be prepared to meet thy God, O Israel: for I will come and I will dwell in the midst of thee." Therefore to receive this guest, adorn the chamber of thy heart; for He desires not only to come to thee, but also to dwell in thee: and as in a bridal chamber sweetly to repose. Happy the soul that merits the coming into herself of this so great a guest: and Him Whom all creation does not fitly hold, SHE WITH LOVING DESIRES DRAWS INTO THE MOST HIDDEN RECESS; that she may the more blissfully rest within: the less she delights in aught without. Happy indeed, to whom deigns to come the most High King of Heaven, the Lord of kings: not to judge or terrify: but lovingly to visit and console her as one well-known and dear to Him. For the gentle King comes to visit and comfort all them that mourn in Sion: to give peace to them that dwell on earth: to put off severe judgement, to exercise mercy: to grant pardon to sinners, to receive the penitent, to deny grace to none: and finally to bestow everlasting glory on all them that await Him unto salvation. Amen.

Amos, 4. 12.
Zach. 2. 10.

III

On Christmas Day. Of the Feasts of the Soul.

John, 3. 19.  *HE light is come into the world.* Aid me, almighty Father, that according to the desire of my heart, as I meditate on the solemnity of to-day's festival of Thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, some sweet and devout matter may come to me to bestir my sloth to devotion and giving of thanks. Enlighten my heart with the invisible light of Thy wisdom; Who didst make this most sacred night to shine with the dawn of the true light: and hast ordained that this day be solemnized with festive joys.

For nothing shall be pleasant or joyous to me: unless Thou Thyself first enlighten my mind; so that at rest from all disturbance of vice: it may be rapt in the contemplation of so great a celebration.

Happy festival on which both joy of mind is felt: and the soul invited by Thee is plentifully refreshed with spiritual banquets. For it is no feast to me: save it be in the heart. But indeed it is often celebrated outwardly on that account: that it may be the more joyously and gratefully solemnized within. For outward festivities are an encouragement to internal feasting: and a certain presage of eternal joys.

When therefore my interior man concords well and rejoices with the outward festivity; I seem to have now not a single but a double feast: for what is wrought without, is the more holily possessed within. It is also a double major feast: it

is even a solemn. Which things the spiritual and devout soul better understands: that is wont to celebrate such feasts in spirit and in truth. For THE SPIRITUAL MAN JUDGES ALL THINGS. And how much one feast of the heart differs from another, and excels by a particular gladness: she, to whom Jesus deigns to come and TO MANIFEST HIMSELF ON THE FESTIVAL, knows well, taught by sweet experience. For He it is of Whom the chief festivals are solemnized: and happy she to whom He comes, and allows Himself to be seen with joy. But I think that the soul is not always drawn to God with one and the same affection of devotion, nor always visited by her Beloved in the same manner. And so, according to the lesser and the more sublime visitations, the diversity of festivals may not inaptly be distinguished; so that now it is a double feast in the soul: when according to the prophet David heart and flesh together rejoice in the living God; when so great a joy is felt poured into the heart, that it is necessary to express the same by exterior voice and gesture: and it becomes delightful to praise God devoutly in hymns and canticles. But then a double major is kept; when so great is the inebriation of the interior man, and the gladness of the exterior sensitive man: that human weakness for the heat of love cannot contain and endure it: but neither by any symbols of words can be expressed: what things the soul, visited by God, experiences wrought within her on such a feast. THEY ARE RATHER TO BE CONCEALED BY SILENCE: if ever any such are granted of God to be experienced. Ps. 83. 3.

But she secretly discourses of these things with God alone: Who understands her better in her silence and without words. FOR THEN IT BEHOVES

EVERY CREATURE TO BE SILENT: WHEN GOD SPEAKS to a soul above natural understanding. AND THEN IS SHE BEST INSTRUCTED: WHEN THUS HER SPEECH IS WITH GOD ALONE. O teacher, truth: how speedily and perfectly is he imbued, to whom Thou dost manifest Thyself. On this feast the altar pieces are uncovered and the relics of the saints are exposed: for to this loving soul the hidden things of scripture are revealed: and the secrets of the heavenly fatherland, the state of the saints, and the eternal rewards are made known by way of special consolation.

O great and happy feast: whose celebration is granted not to all, but to a few. How far are these holy solemnities from the lovers of the world; who relish only earthly things: and look to outward things alone. To them appears foolish, and almost nothing: whatever is not resplendent with outward glitter. They usually wonder how the good can take leisure in God, and abstain from the pleasures of the flesh; for they know not how great comfort the spirit possesses within, and these experience: who for the love of God renounce all worldly delights. But such men live in ignorance and error: as pursue and love only visible things.

But when is a solemn festival of the soul celebrated? Would there were one to tell me and make me understand: if, however, that can be told which is so sublime and secret: as to be far removed from all previous standard. If ever then the soul resting in rapture of mind, FORGETFUL OF ALL THINGS PRESENT AND LIKEWISE OF HERSELF, abide mindful of God alone, and freed from all corporeal imagery pass into the abyss of the divine light, looking upon eternal things; what man would

deny that she is celebrating a solemn feast, who, illumined by the rays of the eternal sun, stands so admirably raised above all things created? All this, however, seems to belong rather to the glory of eternal blessedness: than to the wretchedness of the present life. We possess therefore now rather the name and commemoration of a solemn feast than the real experience: because its perfect brightness is reserved for the saints in Heaven. O festival of festivals: where men and angels gathered together praise God three and one. O how solemnly they chant there, how sweetly they praise; where they have always present: clearly see, and joyously contemplate God. Indeed, from the thought of that rejoicing and perpetual solemnity of Heaven: I find all joyous festivity of the present time become discordant. Therefore towards that solemn and eternal festival, which for its greatness can neither be conceived nor expressed; the whole affection of our devotion should vehemently aspire and be incited: as often as feasts are solemnly celebrated on earth. Whence all our feasts are as it were prefaces to that eternal festivity: rather than to be named true festivals. Here, however, they commence in the light of faith: but there they are all perfected in the light of glory. For there is the praise of the angels, and the most sweet harmony of the holy souls: there in the Creator's presence all rejoice in unison. But with us it is well: if at any time it is granted to experience a little thereof. Who would not be glad to be present among the hymning choirs of angels; where there is no discord of voices, no relaxing frivolity, no harassing occupation, no pressing need, no corrupting affection, no distracting imagination: no subject of

disturbance, no occasion of temptation, no carelessness, no disorder, no toil, no weariness, no fatigue: but sovereign peace and tranquillity, supreme joy and honied sweetness, absolute concord and deifying brightness, full bliss and perfect security? O how brief and trifling is that which here we celebrate: how imperfect and wanting in splendour that which here we solemnize. For as long as we suffer the darkness of our own corruption, as long as we bear a mortal body: we scarcely grasp clearly anything of the light and the boundless spirit of immortality. For our celebration endures barely one night and day: SINCE OUR WEAKNESS CANNOT LONG PERSIST IN DEVOTION. And would that a greater part of the time were spent in spiritual melodies: and less were given to outward celebrations. If the truth be considered, it is clearly evident, that our festivals here are imperfect, however sublime our chant or music; however much interiorly we rejoice or praise: for speedily the present joy is lessened by divers hindrances. However this is not very wonderful, seeing that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and that the whole time of our journeying is suited rather to struggle than to rejoicing: and that the celebration of feasts belongs rather to the citizens of Heaven than to the exile sons of Eve. But lest we be cast down and harassed by our miseries, and become forgetful of the divine blessings: the eternal wisdom of God has provided, and holy mother Church has ordained; that in the desire of the soul each year the festivals of Christ and His saints be solemnized: in order that devotion may be aroused, faith strengthened, charity increased. For so much the more devoutly does one celebrate the feasts, and the more worthily

honour God in His saints: the more he makes progress in the spirit, and the more utterly he gives himself to the love of eternity. For therefore came the Light into the world to show us the way to Heaven: to enkindle our heart to the love of Itself, and draw us away from all earthly things; to give us the light of wisdom, and chase away the darkness of ignorance: to make us together with Itself sharers of the kingdom, children of grace, and coheirs of eternal glory. O glorious Light born of the Father: O bright Wisdom of God, brought forth of a virgin this night: grant me devoutly and worthily to tender Thee thanks; grant me to sing aloud to Thy name, reverently bow, humbly kneel, worshipfully adore: and with the holy angels solemnly to chant to Thee, "Glory in the highest." For praise and honour befit Thee, O Lord; Who didst deign to be incarnate for our salvation. Amen.

IV

On Christmas Night. Of Seeking the Infant Jesus

SEEK ye the Lord, while He may be found; call on Him, while He is near. Arise, all ye faithful of Christ: hasten together to this solemnity of the birth of the Lord. For this is the most holy night: on which the Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ, willed to be born of the glorious Virgin Mary. Arise, therefore, all, and watch: prepare ye your hearts and pray. The Lord is come: come and adore. Seek Jesus, and you shall find Him: knock at the door, and it shall be opened to you: Is. 55. 6.

enter the house and you shall see. Our King is arrived: Christ is born to us. Come, let us adore and fall down before Him: for He it is Who made us. Come, ye angels and archangels: chant and rejoice and sing psalms. Be glad, ye just in the Lord; sing a hymn to our God: proclaim His works among the nations. God is come in the flesh; He is with us in human nature: Who is never away from us in the divine. Come, little and great: old and aged, youths and maidens; sing to the Lord a new canticle: for he hath wrought wonders this day. LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS WITH YOUR HANDS TO HEAVEN; AND ABOVE ALL REJOICING GIVE GLORY TO HIS PRAISE. The Lord is with us: be not sad. Put on, ye chosen ones of God, the garments of gladness and joy; cast away the works of darkness, and put ye on the armour of light: as in the open day, so let us watch this sacred night. Let us rejoice and exult; let us sing canticles and hymns: let us praise the God our Saviour. Let us offer Him our vows: let us present Him the service of our mouth. The Lord is with us, depart not: weary not; but stand manfully; and sing psalms to Him with cheerfulness.

Who can sleep now; while the angels are singing in the heavens, and the voice of praise resounds on high? Who would remain in his bed; while all rejoice to be with Jesus in gladness? Who would not rise this night with eagerness; when all things seem to be rejoicing? Therefore be glad and rejoice, daughter of Sion, give praise, O Jerusalem: for this day true peace has come down from Heaven, to appease and restore the things that are in Heaven and the things that are on earth. This day the true Light has shone upon

the earth: to enlighten every man that believeth in Him. This day there is great joy in Israel: for Christ is born in Bethlehem. This day throughout the world the heavens are flowing with honey; for from the mouth of the learned come forth most sweet discourses: whereby the weak are refreshed, the devout consoled; the ignorant instructed, the slothful aroused: the faithful strengthened, and unbelievers put to shame.

To-day the angels rejoice, the archangels exult: and all the just are in devotion and spiritual joy. To-day night is turned into day and great brightness: for to the righteous of heart a light is risen up in darkness, the merciful and compassionate Lord. Let this night be blessed for ever: and numbered among the days of solemnity. Let them bless it who are wont to bless the day; and praise it all the children of light: for therein is born Christ the Son of God, the Light of eternal light. Let it not be dark; but let it be illumined by a light from above: and throughout the whole Church let many lamps be lighted. Let nothing therein be passed over that concerns its beauty: but let its praise be continued even to the breaking of the rising dawn. And when the day shall have dawned: may the Sun of Justice, Who is born, shine in the hearts of all them that love Him: and may fresh devotion again rise in the hearts of all that celebrate. A holy day has shone upon us to-day: let all the faithful rejoice: for God bespoke of old: "Be light made": and light was made. O truly blessed night, brightened by the birth of the true Light, and made resplendent with the glory of angels: by whose hymns and praises it is rendered the more joyous for all the faithful throughout the world. O truly most

blessed night, more brilliant than all the nights of time: which merited to know the season and the hour: when from the virgin's womb came forth the Son of God, clothed in the body of our weakness. O sacred and stainless nativity: which the fruitfulness of a virgin brought forth. O fruitfulness above nature; which the purity of a virgin beautified, and the sovereign majesty chose: that man's mortality might be saved. O blessed and gladsome birth; which has changed the curse of our first parents into blessing: and has turned their grief into everlasting joy. Deservedly is this night worthy of the veneration and love of all men: wherein Christ deigned to be born to deliver all. Blessed therefore be the holy Trinity: by Whose goodness and wisdom the dignity of mankind has been restored, and the cunning of the devil deceived. I bless Thee, heavenly Father: Who didst send Thy beloved Son into the world for our redemption. I bless Thee only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ: Who to redeem us men didst assume our nature. I bless Thee, Holy Ghost, the Paraclete: Who didst gloriously and wondrously perfect all the mysteries of our redemption from the beginning unto the end. To Thee be infinite praise and glory: to Thee be honour and empire, O supreme, eternal Trinity: by Whose providence and ordering so sweet and solemn a festival has come to us. Amen.

V

Of the devout visiting of the new-born Infant Jesus

HAVE you seen Him whom my soul loveth? Cant. 3. 3.
I speak to you, O holy angels: tell me what you know of my Jesus. Where is Is. 9. 6.
the Child that is born to us? Show me Him Whom my soul loveth. But if you will not show me: tell me at least by those whom you shall deem meet. I speak to you, O shepherds: tell me what you know of my Jesus. Where is the child that is born to us? What did the angel announce to you? "I bring you tidings," he said, Luke, 2. 11.
"of great joy: for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord in the city of David." And what sign did he give you? "Ye shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes," he said: "and laid in a manger." And what did the holy angels sing? "Glory to God in the highest," they sang: and they added, "on earth peace to men of good will." And after this what did you do? "At once with haste and joy we went over to Bethlehem: and we found Jesus lying in a manger." O me, what do I hear: how sweet and pleasant is this which I learn. It is enough for me at present. I will go and see this child: before I die. But wait a little while: I will go with you: and we shall all be received together. And do you, all ye angels of God, hasten: and lead me by a quick route to the manger of Christ. Open to me, Joseph and Mary; open the door, my dear ones: that entering His tent, I may adore His sacred feet. All the kings of the earth desired to see Solomon: and to hear his wisdom. And behold Matt. 12. 42.

here a greater than Solomon. Permit me then to enter: that I may kiss His footstool. For it is He of Whom the prophets foretold; Whom the angels announced: Whom the shepherds visited. It is He Whom I seek, Whom I love: Whom I long to see.

What fearest, my soul? Call, seek, knock: until
Ps. 41. 5. the door be opened to thee. "Go over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle: even to the house of God." Approach with trust, and draw nigh to the new-born Child WITH LOVE: for He shall not cast thee off, nor drive thee away: but freely He shall admit thee, and show thee His grace. Fear not the face of Him that wails in the manger: He is lamenting thy sins, not His own pains. He comes to seek thee: not to destroy. He comes to save thee: not to judge. He comes to loose thee: not to bind. He comes to suffer evils: not to inflict. He desires to deliver thee: not to imprison. What fearest thou before the poor little Child? He is God, thou sayest: and in His hand power and empire. It is true. Nevertheless He does not come now to judge: but to forgive sins. He offers mercy: He withholds vengeance. He tenders grace: He puts aside anger. He shows love: He casts out fear. HE DESIRES TO BE LOVED: RATHER THAN TO BE FEARED. Say therefore, "Thou art my Saviour and my Redeemer: O Lord my God, Thou art well come this day. O desirable and most lovable Child: show me Thy mercy: who am not yet fit to see Thy glory. Stretch out to me Thy right hand: who am not able to endure Thy justice. For Thy boundless love's sake, blot out all my iniquity. I am sick and covered with sores, heal my soul. I am blind and naked: enlighten my darkness: and clothe me with true virtue. I AM WITHERED AND CRIPPLED: WATER MY

FACE WITH TEARS, AND DIRECT ALL MY STEPS IN THY PATHS. My heart speaks to Thee, my face seeks Thee; I long to see Thy countenance, Lord Jesus: and with the angels and shepherds devoutly to visit Thee. For Thou art the salvation of my face and my God: Whom truly I ought to love above all things. None is more beautiful than Thou, none more lovable: none more noble than Thou, none more holy than Thou. Thou art wiser than all the wise: richer than all, greater than all. Thine are the heavens, and Thine is the earth: the sea and all things that are in them. Thine is the day, and Thine is the night, the summer and the spring were formed by Thee; Thou hast ordered all things in certain seasons: Who didst will to be born in the dark night and the winter cold."

Ps. 88. 12.
Ps. 145. 6.
Ps. 73. 16, 17.

O wondrous and ineffable love of God and my Lord Jesus Christ, wailing in the manger: Whom all the angels in Heaven praise and worship. O what great thanks am I bound to render to the most loving Lord my Saviour and my Redeemer, born for my salvation: Who refused not to be sheltered like a poor miserable man in a stable in the company of beasts. Certainly I have no worthy praise-offering: but nevertheless I FREELY PRESENT THEE A GOOD WILL IN SIGN OF LOVE AND GRATITUDE. What more? Shall I sing with the holy angels: or weep from compassion, thinking on the tears of the wailing infant? Each of these actions gives pleasure, each of these actions affords delight: both to weep with Jesus, and to praise Jesus with the angels. And all this I desire to do to the glory of God; and to humble myself before the eyes of His Majesty: Who humbled Himself even to the form of a little child.

VI

Of abiding near the venerable Crib of Christ

Gen. 27. 17.

HOW venerable is this place: this is no other but the house of God and the gate of Heaven. Enter, enter, my soul, this poor little domicile of the King: seek hospitality here to-day: here set thy dwelling: abide with Jesus and Mary: and celebrate with them this day's festival. Do not turn away elsewhere: but stand here to-day: or humbly sit NEAR THE CRIB. It is good for thee to be here: AND MUCH BETTER THAN TO DWELL IN THE GILDED MANSIONS OF KINGS. The dwelling in this little house ought to please thee much, and the society of these three staying here together; for even if the walls offend because of their poverty: the inhabitants nevertheless are exceedingly noble because of their patience and virtue. Here then today thou shalt dwell: here thou shalt abide, here THOU SHALT CONTINUE. But go in further and examine the building of this place more closely: seek and inquire where lies that venerable crib, which holds the Creator of the world: and guards the Child God, the treasure of Heaven, the price of redemption, the joy of angels and men. See how God born man lies bound in a cradle and holds His peace; in what great obscurity and poverty He dwells among strangers: Who with the Father in Heaven is the Giver of all things. Embrace this noble crib with loving arms; and kiss it with repeated kisses: then also humbly cast thyself down at Jesus' feet. Here worship God: here weep for devotion. Here watch, here

pray: here read, here sing. Here chant psalms, here praise: here exult with all thy heart. Tell this Child if thou hast aught sad or burdensome: open out thy desires to Him: and treat of everything with Him. The sweet and lovable Child will teach the meek His ways: and will receive the prayers of the humble. He can heal the sick: make whole the broken of heart, and bind up their wounds: grant pardon to the penitent, and deliver them from all their passions. Give Him thy heart: and beg Him to write thereon His most sweet name. Give Him all that thou hast: and be entirely His from henceforth and for evermore. The eternal and boundless love of Jesus will bring this to pass, that thou abandon thyself: and love Jesus above all things.

See now, my soul, and ponder: what riches are here and glory. I regard not perishable riches, nor joys of the world; but the incarnate Wisdom of God, the child-bearing Virgin: Joseph ministering, and the multitude of angels chanting. Truly the Lord is in this place: and I urge thee by no means depart hence. Where wilt thou find what thou hast here discovered? If thou wert to traverse the whole world, thou wouldst not find such a company: so holy a gathering, so united an assembly. The most holy in heaven and on earth are gathered together here: albeit they are very much neglected by worldlings, and reputed almost as nothing. For in all the world such wonders have not been wrought, nor sights so rare and strange beheld; nor such joyful tidings heard; as in this small shelter, where dwell Joseph and Mary, and the infant Jesus laid in the manger. Here are united God and man, mother and virgin: graybeard and child.

Weigh what means this condescension, such tenderness, such love: such humility, such poverty, such sweetness, such grace: and such overflowing mercy. Turn over all the deeds of old presaging Christ; and see how this day the witnesses of the Scriptures are fulfilled: and THE DEVOUT DESIRES of the holy prophets. Behold also the loving ministrations of the most blessed Virgin Mary; how boundless an exultation is hers with her noble offspring: what a sublime contemplation, to see the Son of God begotten of her, lying before her in the crib. Go over and ponder all in such manner: as if thou wert assisting in person at each. For no less ought to be thy love and devotion in revolving these things which have already taken place: than IF THOU SHOULDST BEHOLD THE SAME THIS DAY ACCOMPLISHED IN THY PRESENCE. Let therefore the holy remembrance abide with thee renewed each year; yea not only once a year shouldst thou be mindful of Jesus, born and laid in the manger: but very often should He have place in thy devotions. Great wisdom is learnt from this Child; great purity and patience: such as should be sufficient to edify thy whole life. Every action of Christ indeed is a lesson to thee: and His every suffering is thy comfort. For He has been made unto thee and all the people, salvation and redemption. He teaches thee rather by His example, than by word: He persuades effectively rather by His own actions; than by the deeds of others. Let therefore the sacred birth of Christ be always fresh to thee: and suffer not so venerable a festivity ever to pass without attentive contemplation. And if outward worship pass away with the season: diligent meditation shall not however pass from the mind.

Be not therefore ungrateful to God for this grace, my poor little soul, who hast been so anxiously sought: so compassionately drawn, so lovingly called, so sweetly visited: so fully rejoiced this day. For it is not permitted thee to be sad on the birthday of life: since everywhere it is a day of joy. To thee this day the Infant Jesus is born, to thee a child is given: that with the little thou mayest become little, with the poor poor, with the humble humble, with the patient patient, with the meek sweet and mild. Bow thyself therefore humbly to Him, submit thyself freely: that thus thou mayest merit to exult with Him eternally: Who to gather the little came down from the high dwelling-places of Heaven, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Gather now in this short space of time: what may serve for thy profit all thy life. How knowest thou whether this may not be thy last festival on earth? And would that thou couldst celebrate it now so devoutly, solemnize it so zealously; that thou mightest conceive a great trust towards Jesus: thereby also at the end of time to merit to pass with Him to the everlasting festival. Doubtless it shall be strictly demanded of thee: how much thou hast conformed thyself to Him in life. While therefore there is still time, and earnest devotion avails, take care that it pass not fruitlessly; but enter into such fellowship with Him: that thou mayest be known among His chosen friends. If it pleased Christ to manifest these things for thy salvation: let it not weary thee intently to meditate thereon. Christ is silent with His mouth: but He speaks in deed. His tongue utters no word: but His tender limbs are eloquent. His lowliness speaks: and His

great poverty discourses. The blessed Virgin Mary likewise holds her peace: but the elements are not silent. He lies hid in a manger: but He is made known by an angel. He appears base and abject in the swaddling clothes: but in signs He is proclaimed magnificent. Herod is troubled: but the shepherds seek him. The Scribes and Pharisees disdain: but the three blessed Magi adore Him. Contemplate then in Him not only the great and sublime, but the little also and the lowly; for in each nature He is shown forth the Lord, great and exceedingly to be praised: high above all the angels, and among men the most lowly. Things human are united with the divine, the highest with the lowest; the noble with the base, the glorious with the little: to be venerated together with meet worship by all the faithful. Let not then the swaddling clothes scandalize thee: which preach the humility of the Son of God. Nor let the poor little crib trouble thee: which the King of kings and the Lord of angels hath chosen for Himself. Look not to what is brilliant in the eyes of the flesh: but how great a mystery of salvation is here wrought. LOOK UPON JESUS AND MARY, THE MASTER AND THE MISTRESS OF THE WORLD: that they have no thought for the things of the world. MIGHTY PALACES ARE NOT HERE: BUT HEAVENLY CONSOLATIONS. Here resounds not the clamour of trumpet or lute: but the voices of the heavenly host are heard. Would that thou didst feel thyself to be present in spirit to all this: and couldst not endure to abide elsewhere. The Word of God is now near to thy mouth; if only thou seek with a right heart. For He is found in the lap of His mother: Who before time was in the bosom of the Father.

God has become so near to thee, that He can be held as an infant; carried as a babe: for "the Word is made flesh, and has dwelt among us." John, 1. 14. Behold Whom all the world cannot contain: He lies as a poor child in a manger. And Who bears all things by the word of His power: He is borne by His mother. Whom the cherubim praise and the seraphim: He is nourished with a little milk. What herein is not wonderful; what not lovable? What more wilt thou have? How could He be nearer and more like to thee? BEHOLD THY BONE AND THY FLESH: THY GOD HAS BECOME THY BROTHER. Who ever saw the like: or who ever heard anything similar? Woe to thee if thou depart from Him: and well is it with thee if thou draw nigh to Him with thy whole heart. Draw near with confidence to the throne of His grace: for although He be poor in material things: in Him nevertheless are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Make ready then Col. 2. 3. clean lips to kiss; wash thy eyes with tears to see: cleanse thy hands to touch; open thy arms to embrace: humbly bend thy knees to worship. O if thou hadst now a clean cradle, beautifully adorned on all sides with gold and gems: that thou mightest place the God born child therein. But there is no casket so meet and worthy to receive the God babe; as thy own heart purified from all sin. For He DOES NOT SEEK EXTERNAL ORNAMENT: BUT THAT WHICH IS MYSTICALLY SYMBOLIZED BY EXTERIOR ORNAMENT, THIS IS VERY DEAR AND PLEASING TO HIM. But how shalt thou be fit worthily to receive Him? Thou art black and ugly: and He exceedingly beautiful and comely. What wilt thou do? It is not well to retire from His presence: and it is not becoming to approach

with unwashed countenance. How shalt thou be made clean, entangled as thou art in many vices? But be not too fearful: nor despair of thy wounds. Be displeased that thou art such: weep over the stains of thy faults, wash away with inward sorrow the guiltiness of thy conscience; and seek of Him the oil of mercy, the free granting of a full remission: and the restoring of fresh grace. Thou shalt not be without hope: although stained exceedingly. This Child can cleanse the unclean, make white the black, appease the tempestuous, sweeten the bitter: lighten the burdensome, and root out all that is vicious: speedily bring joy and peace of heart. He is such that He cannot be defiled: and by His touch diseases are healed, and the weak strengthened. Now therefore prepare for Him from within a beautiful crib; in which to place Jesus, the Son of God.

VII

Of the joy of this day, and the devout service of Jesus

Hab. 3. 18. *REJOICING I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God, my Jesus.* O most sweet Jesus and most loving Babe, my joy and my crown: my soul longs to sing and praise Thee. Suffer me to spend one joyous day with Thee: and to pass this holy day in spiritual gladness. For although short be the day and passing the night of Thy birth: nevertheless great is the subject matter for exercising devotion, and as it were an undying fire is lit upon the altar. I hope then that this day will be longer, and that I shall be more devout

therein than is wont; so that my fervour pass not away with the season: but rather grow with earnest meditation. O day of joy, day of the eternal King: depart not from me so speedily: but be to me the cause of everlasting bliss. O when will come that day, to which no night succeeds: which knows not diversity of seasons, but where it is ever bright and daylight; where God is seen face to face, where Jesus is perfectly loved and praised, where the mind is never drawn away from Him, and the affection of the heart never defiled: but where He is all in all. Because of that day of eternity this day is solemnized in time: and that I might live ever there with Jesus: He willed to be here one of mortal men.

O venerable and supremely lovable Jesus, O sweetly to be embraced, worthily to be worshipped and ever to be preached, Babe most glorious; Thou art my only beloved, sought after before all and above all: to Whom I owe myself entirely, and, whatever I can add or desire, comes not up to my wish. For Thou art above all: and whatever I can possess or give is almost nothing, and less than little. I know and faithfully believe, that for my sake Thou hast come hither: for my sake Thou hast willed lowlily to be laid here. For Thou hast done all this for my eternal salvation: and to commend to me the more dearly Thy boundless love.

O how much I am bound to love Thee, how much to praise and bless with angels and archangels, with saints and all men of good will: because for me Thou hast become incarnate and made man. It is strange if ever my thought can wander from Thee: and, after tasting Thy sweetness, be turned away to anything else. Truly

Jesus, a hidden manna.

Thou art a hidden manna, having in itself all sweetness: and surpassing all other sweetness. Thou art a paradise of delight, Thou a garden of pleasures: Thou art the source of wisdom, the sun of justice, the light of the world, the joy of Heaven, the peace of the heart, the comfort of the soul: hope in affliction, refuge in temptation, help in every need. Thy presence brings me joy: Thy absence often causes me grief. All this however love effects, which suffers not the lover to repose without: but compels him either to rejoice in Thee, or sweetly to weep for Thee. Who has brought me hither; if not Love? And who drew Thee from Heaven: and brought Thee down to me; if not Love? O Love and love: how sweet and strong is this love. Thence arises so great a clamour within, and thence springs so burning an eagerness: that nothing to it yields taste or delight, except Jesus, eternal love. This love makes us despise the world: and reckon all things as nothing. This makes us forsake our own: and live under the yoke of obedience. This makes us reject the delights of the flesh: and eagerly seek the toil of penance. This makes us flee the noise of the world: and take leisure with God in silence. This makes us die to the world: and live to God alone.

Heartfelt love of Jesus.

The love of Jesus draws my heart to the crib: and wills that I offer Him devout service. And now what shall I do for the beloved babe, my Lord God, made little for my sake? Hast Thou need of me; Who holdest Heaven and earth at Thy beck? And if Thou dost not need my ministration: nevertheless I need Thine, Whom I am bound to serve according to my power; since for me all grace and virtue come from Thee: and my

whole good depends upon Thee. Would that I could do something pleasing to Thee: for this would be most delightful to me. And if I have not been able to serve Thee in the flesh, and was not worthy to be admitted to this: still in the spirit I can do all by the affection of the heart, and the zeal of a good will. For also BY SERVING MY BRETHREN FOR THY NAME'S SAKE, I can perform many deeds of love which Thou considerest as done to Thee.

An exhortation by loving words.

I desire indeed to arouse by loving words: my devotion towards Thy sacred infancy. Certainly I will not depart hence, but I will sit here near Thee; and contemplate meanwhile Thy dear face: so that I may thus the better forget my misery. Here will I meditate on Thy commandments: and exercise myself in Thy wonders. Here will I be up-lifted from earthly things: and associated with heavenly. Here will I think on the days of old: and have in mind the eternal years. Here will I ponder my last end: and my years in groanings. Here will I appease Thy face by prayer: and beseech my Judge. Here will I be mindful of Thy works: and of Thy numberless blessings bestowed upon the race of man. Here will I find my heart: here will I abandon myself wholly. For IT IS BETTER THAT JESUS SHOULD HAVE MY HEART THAN I: because with Him it is at rest: with me it is in unrest. Here will I sleep, here repose: and my slumber shall be sweet. Here will I arise at midnight to praise Thee: and pray Thee for my sins. From the morning I will watch unto Thee: and to Thy name will I sing the livelong day. If I go forth I will say, I shall come back soon: and if I delay long, I will seek forgiveness. Again will I pray and appease Thy

face: nor will I cease to give thanks. I will rise in great wonder: and I will praise Thy honied name, blessed for ever. I will sit again in my poverty: knowing that I am not worthy or able to think of such ineffable goods: sweet above all the desirable things of the world. Then reverently I will worship Thee: and I will offer Thee all Thy good things; wishing and longing that all Thy works praise Thee: albeit fully praise Thee they cannot. THEREFORE I BESEECH THAT THOU THYSELF PRAISE THYSELF: FOR UNLESS THOU PRAISE THYSELF: NEVER SHALT THOU BE FULLY AND WORTHILY PRAISED. Praise now, O my soul, the Lord: praise thy God, O Sion. Praise Jesus the Saviour: and if thou canst not praise Him perfectly: nevertheless cease not to praise Him partially, according to thy powers.

In my life I will praise Thee, O good Jesus, sweet and dear Babe: I WILL SING PSALMS TO MY GOD AS LONG AS I AM. For Thou hast called me to Thy most holy crib: in which Thou hast deigned to lie for me unworthy. Who can draw me away from this? No one, Lord Jesus: for Thou art my beloved, from Whom I will not be separated for ever. I will abide here therefore IN THE SERVICE OF MY MASTER, AND OF MY MISTRESS, holy Mary, and of St. Joseph, Thy fosterer: if perchance there be need of any service. I will make a little fire, I will blow it diligently: I will lay the table, and bring in the water. I will clean out the hall, I will sweep the little house; I will stop up the cracks and crevices: because of the stormy winds and rain. I will tidy this noble and royal manger; I will arrange neatly therein the hay and the straw: for there are no precious linens here. Then I will gather roses and lilies:

I will bring flowers and grasses; I will beautify this holy nursery, which does not seem to me dirty like a stable: but gives me more pleasure than an imperial palace. I will also open the window; that the brightness of God may shine from within, and the holy angels fly in from above: and fill this whole house with sweet praise. I will shut the door carefully; that Herod may not enter to destroy the Babe: Whom I have undertaken faithfully to guard. For I would suffer myself to be slain: sooner than sacrilegious hands be laid on Him. And if it be necessary to fly, and He will have it so, I am also ready to cross over into Egypt. But when the shepherds come, to them I will open with joy: and bring them into this court of the supreme King. For they are those to whom the angel announced this mystery: and directed to visit; whom devotion brought here: and the praise of God led back. Then, when the holy Magi arrive from eastern parts, joyously I will run to meet such honourable guests, kings and counts; and having greeted them all with becoming respect, I will invite them to enter this court, to behold the face of the KING AND QUEEN: Whose wondrous sign shines in the heavens. With them entering I will enter; with them worshipping I will worship, with them offering I WILL OFFER MYSELF ENTIRELY: AND WHATEVER I MAY HAVE, ALL THIS I GIVE AS A HOLOCAUST TO THE LORD. But when they return to their own country, I will abide here in the court; that I may serve the Lord my King: and His blessed Mother, the ever and glorious Virgin Mary. No man shall be able to call me hence from this court: no bull, no authority, no gift or promise to turn me away. Here will I establish my covenant; here

will I make an everlasting compact: here will I live, here die, and here all shall end.

Let it please thee, I beseech, my Lady, holy Mary: that I abide in the service of thee, and of Thy Son, my Lord, with all devotion and reverence. For I am more pleased to be here and beg with you: than to be in delights with the kings and princes of the world. And if it be needful even to beg: I will go out cheerfully and beg enough for us. And if nobody be willing to give: I will suppliantly beseech the holy angels: and they will provide sufficiently for us from Heaven. For in place of earthly bread: they will rain down for us heavenly manna. O Jesus, manna of hearts, having in itself all sweetness: Thou art our food and our comfort. The affection of devotion speaketh here: and whatever is prepared here tastes most sweet to him that loveth. I beseech thee also, venerable father Joseph, who art so called because of the dignity of thy ministry, and to veil the heavenly secret: that thou deign to admit me to aid thee. Bid something be brought for the comfort of the mother and the Babe: I will be ready for services of this kind.

O if I had known when you first came hither; I should certainly have gone with you: and I should have led the ox, or the ass. Willingly I should have carried the cloak of my Lady, or Joseph's bag, all the long way: or even I should have procured a shelter. O would that I had been so near, that I should have heard the holy angels sing, and this great joy would have been announced to me; ah, how joyously and with what haste I should have gone over to Bethlehem, and should have outrun the shepherds themselves, if I could: that thus I might have merited to be the first to

see my new born Lord. And if they reverently returned to their flock: I nevertheless should have remained with my Infant Lord. I should have been willing to forsake all my sheep: rather than leave my Jesus; or even to sell the whole flock: that I might provide thence for my Lord with His family. But it has not been given to all, to see the Word of God made flesh: and laid so innocently in the manger. To all nevertheless it is now preached, and proclaimed throughout the whole world: so that if anyone wishes to believe, and seeks to be saved, and draws nigh with a whole and pure heart to this Child; he shall receive remission of all his sins from Him: and by His gift after this mortality shall possess eternal life. Amen.

VIII

Of the desire of seeing and embracing Jesus

SHOW me Thy face: let Thy voice sound in my ears. For Thy voice is sweet and Thy face comely. These are the words of a loving soul, to Thee, most sweet Jesus Christ. But I beseech Thee, good Babe: that Thou also grant to me a sinner to say these words in the desire of my soul. For when shall I be satiated of thinking and speaking of Thee? For Thou art the salvation of my countenance, and my God. Show me therefore Thy face: and my soul shall be saved. Whensoever I am sad, look upon me and pity me: and my soul shall be comforted. For Thou art my hope from my youth: and unto length of days and old age forsake me not. O how lovable and sweet Thou

Cant. 2. 14.

hast become to men: for whom Thou hast deigned to be made a little child. For by such charity Thou drawest me to Thyself, and dost mightily press me to Thyself in Thy love. O most sweet and most loving child Jesus: deign to comfort me a while this day. My soul loves Thee: because Thou hast first loved me. For on account of Thine immense love, and the incomparable sweetness Thou hast shown towards me: Thou didst come down from that secret dwelling of Heaven into the prison of this world to visit and console me. And now Thou hast done well by coming: and Thou hast acted with much wisdom and sweetness appearing in such guise. Putting on human nature: Thou hast taken the form of a most beautiful babe: Who abiding in the Godhead pure and simple without any figure surpassest all understanding. But I in my grossness could not grasp such a substance excelling all shape: therefore in condescension to me Thou hast united my nature with Thyself, presenting the familiar form of a man; that thus by nearness of nature Thou mightest show greater affection: and by the visible aspect of man lead us by the hand to the invisible substance of the Godhead.

O most sweet incarnate Wisdom of God: how sweetly and wisely Thou drawest me by Thy dear infancy. Turn now Thy face to me, good Jesus, and cast me not away from among Thy children; but show me a gracious mien: that seeing Thee, my heart may be glad, and conceive thence new joy. O happy hour, when Thou lookest upon me with eyes of tenderness: and showest me the favour I desire. For this is a sign of Thy clemency: this affords me confidence and comfort. This also invites me to kiss Thy feet, hands, and

blessed mouth. O feet of my Lord Jesus Christ, sacred and worthy of every embrace, small and tender, confined within the narrowness of the manger; who shall yet walk for me: and oft be wearied. Alas! you suffer no little cold: for haply you have not sufficient clothing to cover, and fire to warm. These are the tender and beloved feet of my Lord Saviour: yet to be pierced on the cross with sharp nails. And then you shall be fearfully bathed in blood: who now bear patiently the hard frost. These are the feet most prompt to carry the tidings of peace; ready to tread the rough road: destined to show the world the way of eternal salvation. These are the feet of mercy and justice; before which the Ethiopians shall fall, the demons flee: and kings and princes worship. Then shall draw nigh sinners doing penance; and devoutly kissing them: they shall obtain pardon and grace. The feet of Jesus.

O beloved Babe, not only Thy feet: but Thy hands also and head and other members offer me to kiss, bless and praise. O most lovely and most pure hands, perfectly proportioned: in no point either too great or too small. These are Thy hands, O Lord, which have made me and formed me: and now have come to restore me. They shall aid me to toil faithfully: and strengthen me manfully against divers temptations. They shall support me in good that I fail not: and upraise me in evil lest I despair. THEY SHALL BLESS LITTLE ONES: and give health to many sick. They shall combat the devil: and reduce all his power to naught. After many years they shall be fastened to the cross; and then they shall send forth broad streams of blood. Stretched out on the cross they shall beseech forgiveness for me: and wounded, The hands of Jesus.

obtain me pardon of sins. They shall open the door of paradise: destroy the gates of hell: and lead thence its captives. They shall appear with their wounds to men at the judgement: and openly show how much God wrought and suffered for
Cant. 2. 6. their salvation. Let this left hand be under my head: and that right embrace me. O if I merit so great a good: how happy and joyous shall I be. Hence now with greater confidence I will dare to draw nigh to the kiss of Thy mouth: and with the boldness of love to press my lips upon Thy holy lips. And if the height of the Godhead terrify: nevertheless the likeness of human nature most strongly urges: and the wondrous sweetness of Thy baby littleness.

The mouth of Jesus.

O holy and stainless mouth of my Lord, full of wisdom and grace; Thou shalt teach me the ways of life, Thou shalt fill me with praise: Thou art to comfort me with good discourse. For if at times the speech of a learned man gives pleasure; how much more will the word of grace from Thy mouth delight? O honied mouth of my Lord, how lovely are Thy lips; how white Thy teeth: how sweetly it shall distil Thy speech. This mouth then of the Lord shall speak judgement and justice; strike the wicked with its lips: and destroy the impious from the earth. It shall open the hidden things of the scriptures: and unveil heavenly secrets. It shall make manifest the counsels of hearts: and make void the wisdom and design of men. The islands shall hold their peace before Thee: and kings and princes of the earth shall marvel. The noble and the lowly shall be converted: and the learned shall impose silence on their mouth. For WHEN GOD SPEAKS, THE EARTH AND THE WORLD SHALL BE SILENT: and all the

power of the heavens shall obey the command of Thy mouth.

O precious and golden mouth of the Saint of saints; who shall be worthy even once to kiss Thee, or to touch the summit of Thy head? It is in sooth a pure and holy soul that saith, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth." SHE THAT LOVES, SEEKS THE KISS: but she that fears, is ashamed to draw near. NOTHING SO RECONCILES, NOTHING SO APPEASES GOD: AS THE PURE LOVE OF GOD AND CONTEMPT OF SELF. I beseech Thee, good Babe, Jesus most sweet, Babe small and great; perform this mercy with Thy servant, that with humble condescension Thou suffer me to touch, embrace, and kiss Thee with kisses of love: as long as Thou art small, and lying in a manger. For thus Thou art loved more sweetly: held more lovingly: borne more easily, and feared less. But when Thou art become a man, it is not lawful to act thus: but it will behove to pass to things more serious. All things have their season. Now it is the season of embracing; later it shall be the season of weeping: when in place of the kiss of the mouth will be given Thee the cup of bitter brewing. Now it is better to taste the joy of Thy birth: but great sorrow of compassion will rather be felt later: when Thou art stretched naked on the cross; Who now, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, art laid in a manger. Give me, most loving Babe, the kiss of Thy charity: and accept the worship of my humility. Behold my desire, and offer the sacred KISS OF THY MOUTH; and let this be to me a sign of peace: and AN INDISSOLUBLE BOND OF MUTUAL LOVE. I know and believe that Thy touch heals: Thy embrace unites: THY KISS IMPRESSES LOVE. Whom Thou touchest within,

Cant. 1. 1.

Eccl. 3. 1.

Thou curest of fleshly affection; whom Thou embracest, Thou unitest with Thyself: Thou sweetly kissest him: whom Thou makest to be fervent in Thy love. Now tell me what thinkest Thou: and make me experience the word that is spoken.

"Receive," saith this Babe, "a kiss, and under-
Apoc. 2. 17. stand a mystery; for no man knoweth but he that receiveth; and no man receiveth, but he that has learnt to walk in the spirit. Then I kiss thee, when I infuse into thee the gift of My love. Then I EMBRACE THEE; WHEN I DRAW ALL THE AFFECTIONS OF THY HEART TO ME: so that there be NOTHING in creatures, that CAN allure or attract THEE. But then thou dost kiss Me: when thou art compunct with true, sincere love: and seekest comfort of no creature. Thou dost kiss My feet: if thou followest the steps of My humility, from love rather than from fear. Thou dost kiss My hands: if all good works done or to be done, the whole thou dost attribute not to thyself, but to Me. And then thou dost embrace Me: when thou feelest thyself united with Me by intimate affection of heart, and so strongly bindest thyself: that thou desirest TO BE WHOLLY MINE, and keepest back NOTHING of private love TO THYSELF. Then shalt thou be able
Cant. 2. 16. to say with the spouse in the Canticle, 'My beloved to me, and I to Him: Who feedeth among the lilies.' If thou wouldst freely forsake thyself, and despise all earthly things; I would receive thee as My familiar friend: and make thee rich in virtues. For who is devoted and wholly given to Me: I to him in turn will manifest Myself utterly without reserve; because therefore was I, God, made man: that man might be in Me for ever blessed. I have given Myself all to man: that man might be wholly given to Me. For 'My

delights are to be with the children of men': to whom I have come to give also the kingdom of Heaven: and by contempt of the world to bring to the everlasting fellowship of the angels." Prov. 8. 31.

IX

To the Blessed Virgin, that she show us her Son, Jesus

MY *Spirit hath rejoiced: in God my Saviour.* Rejoice this day, holy Mary: bringing forth the joys of a new salvation. Rejoice, Mother intact: because the glorious flower of virginity abides with thee. Rejoice, childbearing Maiden: because thou art free of the curse and reproach of women. Justly canst thou rejoice in Jesus, thy Saviour; for Whom the heavens contain not, thou dost nurse in thy lap: and with thy holy hands dost lay Him in the manger. Justly dost thou worship Him, Who is born of thee in time: for thou knowest He has a Father above thee, God. Rightly dost thou offer Him a mother's service: to Whom thou dost owe an unblemished begetting. Rightly does thy spirit rejoice in Him above all things: by Whose grace thou hast become so sublime and HEAVENLY. Let Heaven and earth praise thee: and all the beauty thereof render thee thanksgiving. Let my soul praise thee, Lady MOST DEAR: AND ALL MY INTERIOR EXULT IN THY PRESENCE WITH THE DEEPEST REVERENCE. The tongue suffices not, to proclaim thy praises: nor the mind to meditate thy greatness. Therefore with exceeding humility: I bow before thee, beauteous Mother of God. Accept my homage and with gentle love give heed to the desires of my heart. Luke, 1. 47.

My soul seeks to see Jesus: for I know that He is my good. Show me the hidden treasure: which thou hast lying near thee. I believe that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God: and the first-born of thy fruitful virginity. Him I acknowledge my God, Creator and Redeemer: born today for my salvation. Him I seek to see through thee: and reverently to worship. Thou hast wrapped Him in swaddling clothes; and so He cannot easily be seen: or recognized by strangers. For unless thou, holy Mother, deignest to show Him: who shall be worthy to look upon Him? For by thee we have access to the Son: and by the Son to the Father. Show Him therefore to me: and it is enough for me before all else. I ask not, nor seek any other comfort, but Jesus thy Son: my chief refuge, thy singular joy. My Lady, holy Mary, with a great desire I desire to see Jesus: Whom I know thou lovest before all and above all. My heart desires Jesus: my affection cries for Jesus. "If thou wilt see Jesus," she saith: "then it behoves thee to have pure and clear eyes. If thou wilt see Jesus: strive to keep thyself humble and devout in all things. If thou wilt see Jesus: thou must leave all earthly things, and despise thyself." O most beloved Mary, I know that I am exceedingly impure: and exceedingly unworthy to behold thy Son. But nevertheless I cannot rest: unless I first see Him. I am utterly unable to hold my peace: but from mighty affection I am compelled to importune. I know that He wishes to be asked; and that thou wilt willingly aid the petitioner: therefore I must not easily desist from my prayer.

Jesus, Son of God, have pity upon me, I crave; show Thyself to the soul that seeks Thee: and

longs to behold Thy countenance. Why hast Thou been willing to come into the world; if Thou wilt not be seen by men? Why hast Thou deigned to be born; if Thou wouldst not also be recognized? And why hast Thou chosen to be laid here; save that Thou mightest be more easily found, and more openly seen, and embraced? I could not rise to Thee in Heaven, to see Thee: and therefore Thou hast come into the world to me that I might have Thee visibly before me. Do not then deny Thyself to me: otherwise Thou drivest me to weep. If Thou wilt not be seen: why didst Thou reveal Thyself to the shepherds? For they came in haste and saw. If Thou wilt lie concealed; why didst Thou call the Magi from the East to Thy cradle by the guidance of a star? But certainly Thou willest to be seen: for Thou makest Thyself be sought by many. Therefore I also will to see Thee. And although I am not a shepherd or a king, I am nevertheless one who would willingly be OF THY SHEEP: AND DESIRES TO BE RULED BY THY PRELATES. For if I do not see Thee, I shall not rest: and unless I embrace Thee, I will not hold my peace. Grant me therefore to see Thee: and Thou shalt see me be silent in peace. For Thou art that beloved: Whom I long to see. The heavens, the earth, the sea, and all things that are therein, I care not to behold: so that if only once I be able to gaze upon Thee. All things are narrow and little to me in comparison of Thee: until I merit to see and enjoy Thee. I say once: but I mean for ever. I ask little: but I desire it to be long. Now therefore satisfy my desire: and fill me with joy in Thy countenance. If thou deniest me this: know that Thou wilt sadden me not a little. And if Thou

dost sadden me; who is there that can comfort me? Was it not to be consoled by Thee that I came to see Thee: and to rejoice much in the sight of Thee?

"Come," He saith, "good desirer: come and see. I am Jesus, whom thou seekest. If therefore thou seekest Me: suffer all else to depart. Bring hither thy heart: and see thy Lord. See in the spirit, as of old the HOLY PROPHETS SAW: WHO, ILLUMINED BY FAITH, foretold that I should be born of a Virgin. For the eye of the heart is needed here, and such an eye beholds Me: but the eye of the body is not wanted here: which often is found harmful. For who believes in Me: he sees Me. AND WHO LOVES ME: HE POSSESSES ME. Therefore by believing, thou shall see Me: and by loving, possess Me. Look therefore diligently and consider: and thy soul shall be comforted. See My humility and POVERTY: AND THOU SHALL FIND GREAT EDIFICATION. Behold all the things that are about Me: and thou shalt find nothing costly. See that when I was rich and full: I became poor and in want for thy sake. See that like a strange pilgrim upon earth: and not in my own house, but in an inn, I was born. Look at all this well." Yea, Lord Jesus. Whence also my soul compassionates Thee, seeing Thy want: and my conscience is sharply reproved for its impatience and superfluity. If such be Thy beginning: what will yet be the end? But Thou, Who hast come to suffer: hast chosen poverty and abjection before wealth and honours. "See moreover My hands and feet; that I am bound as a helpless mortal, biding under a mother's care; as one of the children of men weeping. How canst thou laugh: who considerest that God

weeps for thee? See My face beautiful, pleasant, gracious: powerful to cast out all sadness and trouble. But do not, however, ponder merely this outward comeliness, which can be seen equally by the good and the bad; and which will yet be disfigured by My enemies: but direct the sight of the heart to the inner and abiding beauty. See therefore what love I bore towards thee: Who willed to be made mortal man for thee. See My wisdom, which I lost not; that I have assumed a nature without sin: and have undergone the penalty without guilt. See the fullness of grace which I have brought to the world: and the wondrous light which I have desired to infuse into all them that believe. No one of the saints or men had so great a desire for My incarnation: as the desire which I had to be incarnate. For as soon as the preordained moment arrived: with the message of the angel and the consent of Mary at once I was conceived God-man. See therefore My inestimable love; that I burned wholly for the salvation and redemption of man: and could refuse him nothing that was advantageous or necessary.

"O if thou couldst now behold My most burning heart, and couldst feel at least in small part that divine charity which I bear thee: THOU WOULDST NEVER CEASE FROM LOVE AND PRAISE: THOU WOULDST NEVER WEIGH THY OWN TOIL OR GRIEF. See with the inner eyes of faith that the divine and the human nature have been united in one person; and that this most excellent union continues unbroken: and contemplate concerning each nature as much as thou pleasest and canst. For in Me are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom of God; and beside Me there is no salva-

tion for any man living: nor hope of eternal life for the dying. Let thy eyes then be ever towards Me, and thy heart abide with Me: and above all things desirable repose thou in Me. For I am the Lord thy God, Who made thee: and assumed thy nature to draw thee to Me. Come to Me without fear: I am thy brother, prepared even to die for thee. Why dost thou delay? Draw near with haste; and dismiss all things else: that can hinder thee. If thou dost so, thou shalt find thy beloved, in Whom thou shalt most blissfully rejoice: and thou shalt more easily bear all things burdensome. Take especial care, that nothing unrighteous or impure come into thy heart, to wound or trouble thee: or vainly engage thee, or cause thee inner darkness. Between thee and Me nothing must come, that hinders union; or lessens charity, or takes away liberty: or stains purity, or troubles the interior of the heart." "And who shall attain this, O Lord?" "He, who believes that nothing suffices him, save the supreme good, which is I: from Whom flows all good, in Whom are all the good things of Heaven and earth, of the sea, and all the abysses. He, who seeks Me only and alone before all things and above all things, and ever bears Me in mind; who despises himself for My sake; and loves Me purely for Myself: he can contemplate, and praise Me and rejoice with Mary in the Holy Ghost, now and for ever. Amen."

X

Of the Loss and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple

THE *Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem: and His parents knew it not.* Thou hast heard, faithful soul, how a few days ago the lovable Jesus revealed Himself to the shepherds and the kings: and how great was then the joy of his parents: yea and to thee also no small joy was added from the learning of so many good tidings. But to-day, alas, a very unhappy and sorrowful thing has happened; which may well pierce the heart: and stun all who hear it. For it is related that the beloved Jesus was lost by his parents; and, alack, at that time: when His parents went up to the temple to celebrate the feast. O sudden change of the right hand of the Most High. For if Jesus is lost, what joy can there be then in the heart of man? For who has lost Jesus: he has lost more than the whole world. Would it not have been better to have remained at home; than to lose Jesus on the way? Alas, what kind of festival is this: which so great a calamity overshades. For there is no greater grief: than that the comfort of mourners should be said to be lost. Let no pious soul doubt: that Mary was much grief-stricken in this loss of her Son. Would she not have been more pleased to remain in obscurity at Nazareth; than to appear in Jerusalem to-day? But the holy Mother wished to fulfil the custom of the sacred law: and to give all an example of perfect obedience. Therefore she left her home and city: and visited the temple of God with her

Luke, 2. 43.

Son and Joseph. But for a proof of her patience, and for our great profit, God permitted this to happen, that Mary should lose her Son: should seek Him lost sorrowing, and after three days should find Him in the holy temple: and should the more joyously carry back with her her treasure found.

But, O good parents, how could this happen; that you should suffer so beloved a Child to leave your side? Where were your eyes; when they were not fixed upon Jesus? How shall I excuse you of so great a neglect? Did you not deservedly lose Him; Whom you did not watch with sufficient care? But again how shall I dare reprove you in aught; whom I know to be holy and most devout in all? And how also did this good Child make bold; to go anywhere without your knowledge and without permission? Does He not seem to have given you cause of boundless grief; when He absented Himself so long from the eyes of your veneration? Or was it lawful for Him to do all that He would; since He did all with God. I am satisfied, because so He willed: for He is God, Whom no man can reproach. For the eternal wisdom of the Father could not do anything unwisely: Who rules the world in equity. Therefore He has done all things well, not only by revealing His presence to His friends: but also sometimes for certain reasons by hiding His face from His beloved ones.

But Jesus went up to the celebration of the legal feast, not to sanctify Himself according to the law: or to cleanse His conscience by prayer, Who was born holy; but to implore pardon for us: and to teach that THE CHURCH IS TO BE FREQUENTED, FOR THE OBTAINING OF HEAVENLY

GIFTS. He entered the temple to hear the masters and teachers, Who was the Master and Lord of all; that children and youths may learn from early age to read their letters, frequent the school: be intent on learning, give heed to masters; not wander about the streets: or be engaged in foolish games. For eagerness to learn the arts is highly commendable in early years: since by them the understanding is aided to make progress in the divine Scriptures: inasmuch as GOD IS HENCE LOVED THE MORE the more often the word of God is heard, and the more clearly it is explained by teachers: and the more faithfully committed to a good memory from the book. The Child Jesus therefore gave an example to young and old to persevere in the study of saving wisdom: so that none grow slack from idleness, none give ear to vain matters; but that children humbly listen to their masters, diligently seek them: and learn with all discipline. But the old, according to the grace given them and the capacity of the young, should teach with prudence: and faithfully deliver the rules of faith handed down by the holy apostles and prophets: so that all the hearers of the word may recognize Jesus seated in the midst of the doctors, and ever make progress unto better: and devoutly praise God, Who has given such grace to their instructors. AND AS TEACHERS SURPASS OTHERS IN LEARNING AND WISDOM: SO THEY OUGHT TO EXCEL THEM IN THE MERIT OF THEIR LIFE AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THEIR MORALS. Let then both learned and unlearned strive to imitate the examples of the so holy humility and obedience of Jesus Christ and to submit themselves to the divine will. For Christ, a Child of twelve years and a Teacher from Heaven, set an example of

each in Himself: while after the manner of little ones He gave ear to the masters, and reverently bowed His head: and, when most gently reproached by His most blessed Mother, at once willingly obeyed His parents, and went with them: as docile in His ways, so also subject to laws both human and divine: as it behoved and befitted in doing and forbearing.

Would, O Lord Jesus, Thou wouldst grant me more diligently to contemplate the history of this Thy action. For I often find myself turning over in my mind; Thy action once when present in the flesh towards Thy mother: when Thou wert lost and found again by her. Alas, how often I lose Thee by the force of my sins; how sad I walk, when I have been abandoned by Thy grace: and left without comfort to my own poverty. What wonder if then I grieve and heavily groan, deprived of Thy saving sweetness; and destitute almost of all hope of recovering consolation? O how long the delay, and wearisome the hour seems to me, to be without divine consolation; because Jesus, my comforter, is away: and I know not when He will come again. What shall I do; or whither shall I go to seek Jesus, Whom my soul loveth? Where is He now; Who is wont to gladden me with great joy? I know, I know that if He will conceal Himself, no man shall find Him; no man touch Him, no man take Him: because His hour hath not yet come. And if He deign to reveal Himself, at once He is at the door; He enters, the doors being shut: He visits the dwelling of the mind, and shows Himself by SIGNS SO CERTAIN; that there is no need to ask, "Who art Thou?" because the fire of love, infused into the soul, proclaims that Jesus is come, and He Him-

self has done all this. In this moment of trial, I am often troubled and afflicted within myself: and wonder much over Thy secret dispensation, most sweet Jesus. Why, I ask, dost Thou thus try me in strife so often and suddenly; when nevertheless Thou art wholly sweet and without bitterness? What I have said, the experienced know: they shall soon experience, whoever desire to be Thy disciples. This comes not from guile; nor from want of knowledge: but from good zeal, for our secret profit. Therefore what I do not fully grasp, I trust it all rather to Thy wisdom: which does nothing without an assured motive: although the reason be unknown to me. I have however in this turn of things a no slight comfort of my misery: that my sweet Lady Mary also once lost Jesus, and greatly sorrowed to have lost her Son; nor was content to return home: until she had found Jesus, her only joy. Whom when she had not found where she thought: she found where she guessed not. For if she had known that He was seated with such admiration in the midst of the doctors; either she would have grieved less for such a happening: or she would have rejoiced over so grand an act: in the answers of her most blessed Son. And so Jesus is not always found where He is sought: but often He is there where He is least expected. Let no man therefore presume of himself, as if he alone had Jesus: let no man despise another; for HE KNOWS NOT HOW PLEASING HE MAY BE TO GOD IN SECRET: although he be unknown to men, and appear outwardly of no account. For Jesus also was Himself unknown to many then: and few suspected what or how great He was. He showed Himself to whom He would; and when He would, He concealed Him-

self: but He did all with order and to our profit. When therefore I shall lose Jesus, it is nothing strange or new; I feel however that it will be harmful to me: and very grievous to my heart. But I acknowledge myself guilty, and worthy of heavy scourging: for I have not sufficiently guarded my heart, but have walked too lukewarmly and carelessly; therefore have I lost the grace of Jesus: and I know not who will restore Him to me, unless He Himself deign again to have compassion on His poor servant. Bring aid to this my misfortune, most pitiful Mother of God; succour me, my Lady: be nigh, most dear Virgin Mary, entrance to life, gate of mercy. I seek comfort, I beg help from thee; thou knowest too well what a sorrow it is to have lost Jesus: and what joy to have found Jesus. If thus it was with thee, O most blessed Virgin, who wast without fault: what wonder if His grace be not always present as desired to me a sinner, who offend in so many points? What therefore shall I do: that I may find Him again? For if there be any hope of finding Him: it will certainly be by thy counsel; it will also be by thy merits: who art nearer, and dearer than all others. Teach me then the way to recover my beloved: and accompany me until I find Him. And when I have seen and found Him: I will sing with thee in exultation. Rejoice with me all, for I have found Him Whom my soul loveth: for it is He Himself Whom thou didst bring forth, most chaste Virgin Mary.

To this she answers: "Listen to a good counsel; follow my example: and thy soul shall be comforted. If ever thou losest Jesus, do not be downcast, or too much disturbed: do not grow slothful, do not cease from prayer, do not go forth in pur-

suit of exterior consolations; but seek privacy, bemoan thyself, and thou shalt find Jesus in the temple of thy heart: Whom thou hast lost by thy sins, taking pleasure in vain things. For Jesus is not found in the streets of the city; nor in the company of pleasure-seekers, nor of them that live at their ease on earth: but in the assembly of the just, and in the gathering of the saints. With groaning is He to be sought: Who was lost through dissipation. With great care is He to be kept: Who slipped away though want of watchfulness. With fear and reverence is He to be besought: Who HATES THE SLOTHFUL AND UNGRATEFUL. With DEEPEST HUMILITY IS HE TO BE RECALLED, Who was driven away by pride. With frequent and earnest prayer is He to be appeased: Who because of their wandering mind hears not them that mumble. With GREAT THANKSGIVING is He to be praised: Who is ready to bestow His grace. With MOST BURNING LOVE is He to be embraced: Who spares all, compassionates all; Who grants His gifts freely: and is proved to be wanting to no man that seeks Him. And if sometimes He delays: He does not however forsake him that perseveres in prayer; but even while he knows it not, revisits him, more fully enlightens, and INSTRUCTS TO GREATER PRUDENCE: THAT HE NEVER PRESUME OF HIMSELF, BUT ALWAYS HUMBLY AND DEVOUTLY TRUST IN HIM. If then thou dost attend to these things well, thou shalt speedily appease Jesus; thou shalt find Jesus in Jerusalem: for His place is established in peace. Jesus in the temple of thy heart shall preach the sacred words of His mouth; Jesus shall tarry the whole day WITH THEE AS IN A BRIDAL CHAMBER: JESUS SHALL TEACH THEE CONCERNING ALL THINGS THAT TOUCH

SALVATION: of Whom certainly is all whatever there be of grace and virtue in angels and men: whatever also of good shines forth in creatures. Jesus therefore is always to be invoked, always sought: ever to be desired, ever to be remembered, ever to be praised: ever to be venerated, ever to be loved, NOR TO BE OFFENDED IN AUGHT; BUT IN ALL holiness and purity to be served and worshipped: Who is above all God blessed for ever. Amen."

XI

Of four ways of seeing Jesus, according to the affection of devotion

Luke, 10. 23. *LESSED are the eyes: that see the things which you see.* This sweet word of our Lord Jesus Christ, is often to be brought back to memory; to Whom the inner eyes of the mind should be raised in spirit: on Whom the angels long to gaze. For the sight of Him rejoices above all things; the enjoyment of Him fills every desire of the soul: His face beatifies all the saints in Heaven. But what shall they do, who are still in pilgrimage on earth; and cannot enjoy the glory of the eternal brightness? They shall see Him: but not yet. They shall see Him from afar: but not yet close at hand. For they see Him now by faith: but not yet by sight. For they see now in a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face. They see now in briefest moments: but then continually. They see now imperfectly and obscurely: but then clearly and openly. They see now truly; because they believe firmly and well: but then they shall see all fully without a veil. Blessed then those eyes

which now behold Jesus in the light of faith: that hereafter they may see Him in His kingdom with the angels of God. For their conversation is in Heaven according to the spirit: although in the body they be still detained on earth.

But now tell me, devout and faithful soul, which lovest Christ with whole-hearted affection, and strivest to follow the footsteps of Christ; tell me, I say, if the choice were given thee and it were possible: in what form thou wouldst desire and prefer to see Jesus. Which would please thee more, if it were allowed to see Him: laid in the manger, or seated in the midst of the doctors, or preaching to the people, or also hanging on the cross? Which of these dost thou affect more: which tastes sweeter, which touches more deeply? I am unwilling, she says, to make a choice in this matter; I DO NOT WISH TO BE MY OWN MASTER, I DO NOT WISH TO FOLLOW MY OWN INCLINATION, OR TO BE LED BY MY OWN EMOTIONS: BUT I WISH TO BE IN EVERY WAY CONTENTED WITH THE GOOD PLEASURE OF MY LORD JESUS CHRIST; Who can sound and invisibly penetrate the secret depths of my heart: so that He Himself be to me all in all, according to the need of my weakness. What therefore shall better please Him, that let Him do freely; in whatever manner He wishes to appear so let Him show Himself to me: for all that He does will be grateful. When I rightly consider, He is all to me in each; nor shall any change of figure or age alter the faith of truth: for Christ is undivided, truly to be worshipped in all these appearances. I feel that it will be safest for me: to stand by His decision without any will of my own. I have however a desire ceaselessly burning: lovingly to gaze upon Him. For it would certainly

be a great and precious gift of grace: if He granted me to see but one of those which I have besought. Herein I accept beforehand His yea and nay: that it may be done unto me according to His word, in everything desirable or saddening without sin. Let Him but will and manifest Himself to me; I will not discuss the appearance of the human form: if only it be permitted to behold Him in the Godhead. But since this manner of beholding, is the highest and belongs to the blessed; meanwhile I shall be contented, like all the faithful, if I merit to see Jesus in the semblance of His humanity: as sometimes He has revealed Himself in secret vision to certain devout. Therefore, if He show Himself a babe lying in the cradle: I will wholly worship Him God emptied for me, a child in the flesh; I will praise and exult over the unheard-of gift of His so great love and littleness: full of all sweetness and joy. For whom would it not delight to see so gracious a little babe, honoured by angels' praises; to embrace so holy a Child, pure from all defilement: visited by the holy shepherds, reverently worshipped by the most noble Magi. Lo, this tastes sweeter and affects more tenderly; this fills with greater love my innermost soul rather than His other deeds and wonders: whereby He was made manifest in the world true God and man, wailing in a little crib. For this vision is needed a pure eye, a humble mind, a strong faith, a clean conscience; that the God of glory may be seen in frail flesh: and in the form of a slave, the Creator of Heaven and earth.

But what of the eternal Wisdom of the Father in the midst of the doctors hearing them, and answering their questions? Certainly it is delightful

to behold the most beautiful boy of twelve years, adorned with all moral rectitude; darkened by no stain from the sole of His foot to the crown of His head: Who can now speak perfectly, and return answer, and give proof of His unblemished righteousness; so that the eyes of all were fixed upon Him in sudden wonder: and all desired to be refreshed by His presence and sweet discourse. Therefore I also long to gaze a while most intently upon the face of Jesus Christ: and mark what words of wisdom come from His mouth. Behold He sits in the midst of the doctors: the boy Jesus, the Lord of angels. He listens to teachers on earth, Who instructs the angels in Heaven. He asks questions of His elders: THAT ALL THE YOUNG MAY LEARN TO HOLD THEIR PEACE AND BE REVERENT IN THE PRESENCE OF SENIORS. He behaves Himself very modestly; He sits quietly, He is respectfully silent: when He is questioned, He responds discreetly: there is nothing light in His word or action: and in the midst of the wise; He shows forth a pattern of perfect maturity in the years of boyhood. If one had traversed all Jerusalem: thinkest thou he could have found such a child, so lovely and wise? By no means. Nor was there such a one in all the confines of Israel: even if Solomon and all the sons of the kings had been there. Verily there is none like to Him either in Heaven or on earth: or among all lawgivers and teachers. Wherefore it was not strange, if Mary sorrowed much: when she had lost her so dear Child, fair beyond all the children of men. For His face was bright with wondrous pleasantness; His eyes clear, His lips pure: His speech sweet, His answer full of wisdom. When He is silent, He edifies; when He answers, He

instructs: virtuous is everything that He does and says. If He produces such sweet fruits in the bud; what will He bring forth in the ripeness of the harvest?

O how delightful it is to a loving soul to contemplate Jesus of Nazareth, the man approved of God, renowned among the people for His signs and wonders: and preaching to the disciples words of life, sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. If it had been given me for only one day to converse with my Lord in the world, I should deem myself happy: nor should I ever forget that day, for the sublime teaching and lowly conversation of the Son of God with the children of men: Who shunned not the poor or the feeble: but was wont to eat even with publicans and sinners. Alas how foolish is he: who, even for a short moment, turns away the eye of his heart from the light of this most holy example, kindled in the world. We must deem that HE WILL CONTINUE LONG UNLEARNED AND UNWISE, WHO CONFORMS NOT HIS LIFE TO THE HUMILITY OF THE HUMBLE GOD. Very well felt and wrote THE GREAT
Phil. 1, 23. PAUL, enlightened by God, saying, "To me to live is Christ: and to die is gain." Therefore are my eyes ever to my Lord Jesus Christ: for He is my rule and my wisdom. For the perfection of all virtue shines forth in Him, as in a bright mirror; nor can anything better or more perfect in any book or science be discovered and known and contemplated: than in this book of life, and true light enlightening every man, AND TRANSPORTING INTO HIS LOVE ESPECIALLY THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

But above all precious perfumes, the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ diffuses its sweet odour: containing in brief summary the treasure-store

of all graces. Therefore it gives chiefest delight to behold Jesus hanging on the cross, and showing me the most holy wounds of His body: livid indeed with pain, but bright with love, beyond all His actions inducing compunction: so that save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, nothing pleases my mind to think, or read, or speak, or hear. May God do this to me and add this, Who refuses not His mercy to sinners, and is lovingly nigh and favourable to the affections of the devout: that the most sacred Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ never fade from my memory: but the grief and LOVE OF THE MOST LOVING CRUCIFIED pierce and wound my heart, and most mightily unite and inflame: so that the whole world grow vile to me, and Jesus crucified alone above all give relish: and more intimately and most frequently lead me unto the inner mysteries of His Passion.

In many other ways also, according to the desire of the loving soul, the dear Jesus can wondrously reveal Himself: and more fully instruct concerning His most holy life and precious death and the glory of His resurrection; so that what the sacred gospels teach and unfold in words outwardly: Jesus, coming in the spirit, Himself wisely and spiritually explains within, without noise of words, with great enlightenment of the supreme truth, unto the grasping even of the glory of the Godhead; as it is sometimes given to purified minds to enjoy by rapture of the spirit, for the comfort of human frailty: according to that which blessed Jesus Himself promised saying, "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in and shall go out, and shall find pastures." Amen. John, 10. 9.

XII

Of the sacred institution of the Fast, after the example of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 6. 2. *BEHOLD now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation.* The sacred season of Lent has come, wholesomely instituted by the Church: devoutly to be welcomed by all the faithful of Christ, but most of all by religious. Prepare thyself, therefore, servant of God, at this time to live with greater care, to fast more strictly, to pray more often, to sing psalms with greater diligence; so that on the day of the Lord's resurrection also thou mayest merit to rejoice with the Lord the more fully: the more abstemiously thou hast lived. Accept joyously the cross of the Lord: which the Saviour of the world willingly accepted for thee. For the cross is every affliction of the flesh and every mortification of sensuality; which must always be kept under: lest it wax strong against the spirit. This cross the love and grace of Christ makes light and sweet: Who, by His own example and the example of the saints, has delivered the pattern of abstinence. Fear not therefore, weak man: nor be too cowardly to fast. Christ is the motive: Christ has given the example: Christ also will aid to finish well: Who instituted so holy an observance. For what thou dost is for thyself: for thy salvation thou toilest, when thou dost fast. Why dost thou fear, flesh and blood? The holy men of old also had flesh and blood: who passed many seasons in abstinence. If it were not afflicting to the body, or burdensome to nature; how would it be called and be a

time of penance? Penance therefore thou must do in this brief space of Lent unto the remission of the negligence of thy former life; and afflict thy soul for God, as compensation to the divine justice: in watchings, in fasts, in prayers and labours, in silence and keeping of the cell; as also in other holy observances according to the practice of the Church: which now insists more strictly on the maceration of the flesh. For everywhere now she lengthens out the watches: multiplies the singing, prolongs the prayers, genuflects more frequently, bows more deeply: celebrates more fervently, worships more reverently, fasts more fully, reads more studiously, preaches more earnestly; puts on gravity, shows devotion, keeps righteousness, guards discipline: and increases every observance of holiness. For every soul, that is not afflicted this day, shall perish from her people: for she is not worthy to be numbered in the assembly of the saints: who would not imitate the life of the saints by abstinence. Now all thy former life is to be changed into better, and the flesh must be curbed with meet chastisements: so that at the time of the resurrection it may flourish again in newness of life. The days of our negligence are to be redeemed: and something more is to be demanded, in fervour of spirit for the affliction of the flesh. For the spirit it is that quickeneth: but the flesh profiteth nothing, that is the pleasure of the flesh. Cast then thy thought upon the Lord: and He shall nourish thee, rather with the word than with food. "For not in bread alone," He saith, "doth man live: but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Matt. 4. 4. The fear which thou feelest is thy self-love: more timid than it should be. Often an excessive fear,

and anxiety of heart for the failing of the body afflict more than the actual fatigue of the toil itself. If it were not a little laborious; what great thing would it be then? To live according to the ease of nature: is not a life of penance. But to a fervent spirit and to one desirous of doing manfully: all that he doth seems small. For he is eager not only to cut off the superfluous and harmful: but to abstain also from many things that are lawful. Let thy soul therefore be strong and thy will ready to fast: for thou hast the example of many fasting together with thee. Set before thee now one day, and to morrow thou shalt more devoutly add another: and thus in God's name thou shalt accomplish the rest. Is not so holy a fast to be deemed all light and brief for the kingdom of God and the love of Christ? There is no means of escape; and so what does it profit to be troubled much about it? Let sufficient for the day be the evil thereof, so as not to double thy troubles: but rather prepare thyself to undergo things more arduous. The more ready thou art, the lighter thou dost make it for thyself: and the more acceptable it shall be to God. Haply, this shall be thy last fast in this life: and it will give thee great joy if accomplished well. How many fasted last year: who have now passed away from this world. It will be altogether pleasing to God: if, what in any case must needs be done, be done willingly and cheerfully.

Casting aside therefore the fear of the flesh: manfully and readily enter upon the wholesome fast. Walk in the spirit of freedom: and anxiety for the flesh shall not possess thee. Look well into the examples of the holy prophets, Moses and Elias and Daniel: whose abstinence from

food was wonderful, and to whom long periods of solitude were dear. Look also to the most blessed John Baptist, a youth of most excellent conversation, whom the Holy Ghost filled from his mother's womb: leading him at an early age into the wilderness: where with great abstinence and austerity of life he dwelt long in solitude. Then look to our Lord Jesus Christ above all the saints, and put Him before thee as a singular example of abstinence: how He, the Saint of saints, the King of kings and the Creator of the ages, the Sanctifier and Founder of all seasons, endured a fast of forty days and as many nights, eating nothing in the meanwhile: teaching thee by His most holy example to fast, and combat bravely against the temptations of the devil. For what would not become bearable, what not lovable by His example? Who certainly is believed to have fasted rather for thee, than for Himself. And consider not only His fast: but see that thou take His long solitude also as an example for thyself: how He bided secretly in the desert, lived most meekly with the wild beasts, and was thrice tempted by the devil: showing a pattern of solitary life, flight from the world, avoidance of tumult; frequent prayer, love of contemplation, leisure in God, retirement and self-custody.

O if for some little time thou hadst stood there with the Lord Jesus, apart from all human fellowship; would it not have been very sweet to thee to have eaten nothing those days? O how happy wouldst thou have been, if thou couldst have led a hermit's life with the Son of God: and enjoyed the company of Him, to Whom the angels ministered. Where thinkest thou was His little hut, or the cave that sheltered Him: or what kind of

matting was spread under His body? He sits upon the ground, He sleeps and reposes upon the ground: Who rules Heaven and earth. Behold Him now seated, now standing: now bending His knees in prayer to God, His Father almighty. Accompany Him therefore in the grace of devotion: and willingly abide alone with Him in His solitude, having Jesus only for thy comfort; for Jesus alone is better fellowship for thee: than the whole choir of angels in Heaven. In sooth he is never alone, or wholly forsaken: with whom the most sweet Jesus tarries. For without Jesus: the whole world is a weariness and a burden. Learn from Him how patient and meek He is in this vast solitude: how luminous a path He shows religious to retirement: instructing that they must first take leisure in God and themselves, before going forth into public.

Ask of Him, however, the reason of this life and say, "What art Thou doing here, Lord Jesus? Why dost flee men; Who canst not come to any harm from men? Why dost Thou shun the crowd: Who canst not be disturbed by any? For what end also dost Thou so severely fast, and thus chastise Thy sacred flesh; seeing that there is nought in Thee, that needs to be curbed? Or is it for our sakes and for our salvation that Thou dost these things?" "Truly is it so. For the sake of My elect I do and suffer all: that they also may obtain salvation. For I came to give all an example how to live: proving in My own person by what way, with how much toil, and with what fruit the kingdom of rejoicing with Me for ever is attained."

But I beseech Thee, Lord, abandon me not in the wilderness of this world: but be to me a cloud

by day, as a shade from the heat of temptations: and a pillar of fire by night, to scatter the darkness of my mind. May my Lord, or His angel ever go before me; and lead me into the land flowing with milk and honey: that is to the tasting of interior sweetness. "I," saith He, "will accomplish thy prayer: if thou wilt follow My holy manner of life. I have shown the way of penance: which leads to eternal glory. Follow Me through toil and tribulation: if thou wilt have repose and consolation. I fasted, I hungered, I was tempted and I resisted: I contemned the world and its glory, I overcame the devil and his counsel; that thou also by My example mayest learn to fast, watch, and pray, to despise the world, resist the devil, subdue the flesh: and continue in obedience even unto death. If therefore I have toiled so much for thy salvation, and endured such great abstinence, Who was and lived without sin; how much more shouldst thou, who wast born in sin, and still hast the concupiscence of sin, macerate thy flesh, and cut off every occasion of guilt? Endeavour then according to thy power to fulfil the law of fasting imposed on thee: hating rather the inordinate appetite of the stomach than the need of nature. I will gladly accept thy willing offering; and although it be little that thou dost, still a humble and clean oblation is ever pleasing to Me."

XIII

Of taking up now a more fervent Amendment of Life

HE days of penance have come to us: unto the remission of our sins and the salvation of our souls. Blessed be God Who has provided us with the season and the method of doing some penance for our sins. For thus we merit His mercy: and also fuller grace and glory. O sacred time of penance, given unto salvation to all men; putting an end to vice, preparing the way for virtue, bringing in compunction, nourishing devotion: shaking off tepidity, renewing fervour, and arousing to every good. O fervour of devotion, O desire of amendment, now show thy power: and let that appear in effect, which thou hast first conceived in mind. Would that now thou wouldst overcome perfectly if only one vice: or unlearn some bad habit. O if thou wouldst now go up but one step in virtue: or wouldst gain some special grace from the Lord. If now thou dost not toil for thy perfection; when then wilt thou make progress, and when wilt thou correct any failing? For seldom at other times is he proved religious: whoever is not found religious at this season. At other times it is praiseworthy to be on one's guard against what is unlawful: but now it is blamable not to abstain from what is lawful. A holy season demands a holy manner of life: and the many thousand examples of the faithful encourage the more to imitation. If now it becomes every Christian to live more holily; how much more the religious, who ought to show a pattern of holiness and abstinence to others? Fresh devo-

tion therefore is to be taken up, and greater watchfulness is to be exercised over the senses: and a perfect amendment of the whole man, interior and exterior, is to be pursued. Let the mind be devout, prayer pure; meditation frequent, reading earnest, speech seldom and useful, solitude pleasant and enduring: toil in the hands, piety in the intention, Christ ever in the heart. Now also a more careful watch must be kept against the wiles of the enemy: who is wont more bitterly at this time to seek out and tempt the devout; if haply he may render them tepid, or impatient: that their toil may become useless, or penance a burden, or the choir wearisome. Nor is it strange if he dare to tempt us: who feared not to tempt Christ, the Lord. But the wretch departed vanquished and confounded; that hope of victory might be given us: and that we might not fear the devil, who have with us Christ, his conqueror. Let us then manfully resist: and abide constant in all adversities. Certainly it is not without reason that so often we sing in Church: "let us commend ourselves in much patience through the armour of the power of the justice of God." Very necessary is patience now; for many things come contrary to nature: which cannot be borne without interior grace. One thing burdens one man more, and another, another: according to what each feels is more contrary to his nature, or habits. And so he is happy and wise: who at this time is brave, and armed with patience. For it is an excellent remedy not to give way to fear, nor to turn one's back to the enemy: but to do manfully, and to be cheerfully willing to bear worse for the Lord. For thus acted the holy men, our glorious fathers burning

with the love of God, who instituted these observances: and left them to us to do likewise. Finally, our Lord Jesus Christ underwent the grievous torments of the cross: and exhibited to us His patience for our consolation and perpetual imitation. Whoever therefore is now more devout in all things: there is no doubt that he will more joyously welcome the holy pasch. Whoever now is more mortified and more solicitous for his interior progress: assuredly, when the Lord rises, he will more gladly exult with Him.

O good Jesus, sweet guest and faithful friend; give heed to my desires and groanings: strengthen me, a weakling, in this holy fast, consecrated as a law by Thee. Give strength of mind and the grace of interior fullness: so that this bodily fasting may be the cleansing of my sins. Grant me so to abstain from bodily food: that in my mind I may fast from all vices and passions. Defend me from the cunning foe; who by every means strives to hinder the purpose I have conceived: and to draw me back from holy fervour. Give me Thy right hand, good Jesus; so that without weariness, without elation, without distraction of heart in Thy presence I may chant in the choir this holy time: and with all fidelity offer Thee the tithe of my days. Amen.

XIV

Of the going up of Moses into Mount Sinai

Ex. 24. 18. *AND Moses went up into the mountain: and he was there forty days and forty nights.* What, thinkest thou, did this holy man there with the Lord? Who will manifest to me this mystery? O if I had been

present: that I might have merited to hear Moses speaking with the Lord. For Moses spoke: and the Lord answered. He therefore enjoyed there alone the conversation of God: drawn far away from the fellowship of men. There he received the law of the decalogue: there he beheld the secrets of God and many mysteries of our faith. He learnt there in secret: what things afterwards he was to teach the people. There he was taught concerning the making of the tabernacle: the sacrificial rite, and the priestly order. There in spirit he knew and understood, what those exterior and visible institutions signified: and what they mystically foreshadowed of the future. There, free from all worldly cares, he took leisure and saw how sweet is the Lord: how blessed is the man who reposes on His holy mount. There suffering no weariness of body: he was refreshed with the bread of life and understanding. Whence from the long dwelling and constant speaking with the Lord on the mount, that wondrous thing befell him: that his face became resplendent from the sight of God, and seemed horned to them that beheld it; so that the children of Israel could not look upon him, but departed in terror, until he had placed a veil upon himself: and thus tempered the brightness of his countenance to the onlookers. O man of God, glorious and noble: overflowing and penetrated with the light of the divine brightness within and without. Thus also certain devout lovers of Christ, when they are in secret contemplation with the Lord, sometimes are transformed into the brightness of a new life; and carry away with them such an abundance of grace that they fill others with admiration and fear: because of the zeal of their fervour and the wealth of the

heavenly teaching which they utter. But for fear they should seem too overwhelming to the weak, PRUDENTLY THEY CONCEAL THE GRACE OF THE DIVINE VISITATION; they discourse humbly only of those things which may profit and be better understood: but the things that are hidden and sublime they keep within their secret breast; TO GOD ALONE AND THEMSELVES THEY DESIRE THESE TO BE KNOWN: TO WHOM ALSO THEY OFFER FROM THEIR INMOST HEART THE MOST ARDENT THANKS.

O if thou also couldst go up with Moses into the mountain of virtue, and, now during this holy season, tarry there somewhat with the Lord: to listen to the voice of God speaking from the midst of the cloud and the darkness; perchance to thee also would be given some special grace of divine knowledge and enlightenment of mind: whereby inebriated and filled, thou wouldst neglect all earthly things, AND LOVE ONLY THE HIGHER THINGS OF HEAVEN; so that thou wouldst think little of bodily food, but wouldst rather taste by experience in thyself, how true is that word of Moses, saying:

Deut. 8. 3. that "not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

But why is it that only Moses is bidden go up, and with him a few of the elders of Israel? Namely, the fewness of the perfect, and the sublimity of the contemplative life is expressed herein: for the vast multitude of men love rather to be engaged in things earthly and of the senses. Not one however went up into the summit of the mountain, nor entered the midst of the darkness in which God was: save only Moses, called with a special grace by the Lord, and bidden enter unto Himself,

Exod. 24. 12. to whom it is said, "Come up to Me in the mount: and be there." He is called by grace, he goes up

by obedience: he remains by stable perseverance. It is not expedient to go up, unless grace go before, which lifts the mind from all low pleasure; and then it behoves to follow the lead of grace even to the unitive fruition of God, and there rest from all consideration; until again by the ordering of the Lord the soul go down to the works of charity. For Moses also, after long dwelling with the Lord, is bidden go down for the sake of teaching the people, over whom he was placed in pastoral care; that it may be shown that every man, who sublimely and sweetly reposes in God: after tasting this sweetness, must return again usefully and humbly to works of piety. And thus by going up and coming down he shall always find his perfection; so that he never rest idle: but is intent either within on God, or without on the profit of the neighbour. "Go, get thee down," saith the Lord: "thy people hath sinned." Devotion held him near to God: the people's danger compelled him to return again to outer things. He went up by contemplation: he came down again through compassion. The love of God drew him upwards: the love of the neighbour recalled him down. On the mount he thought only of heavenly things: below he restrained strifes and contentions. There he clearly saw the Lord: here he was seldom free from the tumult of the people. There he was rapt above himself in the spirit: here he was often vexed with great weariness because of them. There he was delighted with spiritual things: here he was weighed down by things of the flesh. There he received divine revelations: here below he frequently heard murmurings. There he was devout and at peace: here he strove to be mild and patient. O how good and pleasant it is to be with God on

Exod. 32. 7.

the mount: and to have care of no external things. O how wretched and pitiable is that state, to be engaged in worldly affairs: and entangled in passing employments. HAPPY THE MIND WHICH no worldly business holds back, nor any affection of the flesh draws down: but which A PURE INTENTION EVER UPLIFTS TO GOD WITHOUT DELAY.

XV

OF THE WORDS OF JESUS, AND CLEANNESS OF HEART

John, 6. 64. THE *words that I have spoken to you: are spirit and life.* If thou desirest to take the holy words of Jesus, turn thyself to interior things: and learn to walk in the spirit. For in the words of Jesus there is life: and in such there is the life of thy spirit. Jesus indeed is the light of ignorance: and the only solace of grief. Listen therefore to the word which proceeds from the mouth of God: and from the lips of blessed Jesus. For the most pure Jesus
Matt. 5. 8. saith, "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." A sublime word: because uttered by the Most High. A great promise: but assured by the supreme Truth. Blessed are the clean of heart. O sweet saying: which rightly calls the soul to the promise of blessedness; since God is the reward: and nothing of earth is mentioned here. If the promised bliss delights; let cleanness of heart delight also: that thou mayest see the God of gods in Sion. Let thy whole attention be watchful to cleanse the heart: and let thy prayer be frequent and fervent. For the pure heart has: an infinite good promised to it. Despise the world then: and thou shalt gain Heaven. Forsake

creatures: and thou shalt find the Creator. Leave aside things of time: and eternal things shall be given thee. Heaven and earth cannot be weighed in a like balance: nor can God be enjoyed together with creatures. Who leans on things created: he is hindered from taking leisure in God. He who is clean from worldly things and free from passions: becomes worthy of the heavenly vision. For the more clean a man is: the more pleasing to God is he. God is light: and He loves the lightsome. God is purity: and He casts away the impure. Instable is the love of the world; and every material enjoyment void of content: but what abides for ever, this is the true good of the soul. The love of the supreme good increases: as every earthly thing is despised. Joy will rise to thee interiorly: if thou bravely struggle with vice. And when thou seekest without nothing that passes away: the splendour of the eternal light will shine more brightly. The needs of nature are burdensome to a holy man: but to a chaste heart the pleasure of the flesh is as a torment of hell. For carnal delights beget nought else: but the flames of hell eternal. God grant thee to escape these: and to preserve the dignity of angelic purity. A very great aid to cleanness of heart are perfect contempt of the world; self-denial for the love of Christ: and frequent meditation on the Incarnate Word. Cleanse therefore the mirror of the heart: if thou desirest to gaze upon God. It is most delightful to contemplate the eternal truth and wisdom. The wholesome reformation of the inner man leads to the state of a purer life. But a curious pursuit of the things of the senses: beguiles and confuses the mind. Thou art eagerly drawn to taste interior things by that desirable peace of

mind: which they sweetly enjoy, who pass their life in purity. If thou aimest at having the pleasures of this purity; beware of restlessness: and cut off the occasions of unrest. Wish for nothing high, nothing dainty, nothing curious, nothing passing: and thou hast cast away the chief causes of disturbance. He indeed who has turned his back on everything of time; freely advances towards God. For he that is bound by no tie: easily rises to Heaven, when he prays. Neither the weight of the world, nor the softness of the flesh: can hold him back. The keeper of a pure conscience: also passes safely through the powers of the air. Very desirable is this purity of heart: which makes friends to itself of God and the angels. For this grace of the beatitude we must struggle bravely: pray frequently: and toil unweariedly. The beatitude of purity is established in the valley of humility; it is acquired by prayers: and nourished by tears. O how pleasing and beautiful is this virtue, which rises above all passions: and longs to be united with the impassible God. For every evil thing yields to purity: every created thing is subject to it. For it treats with God without exception or reserve: therefore it cannot be vanquished: but in the Almighty it surpasses all things. The things above minister to it: and the things below work together unto its good. The demons flee from it; the angels zealously serve it: the carnal fear it, the spiritual embrace it. Holy David after the humble confession of his sins: begs that cleanness of heart be given him, saying,
Ps. 50. 12. "Create a clean heart in me, O God." He weeps over the crimes he has committed, he reproaches himself that he has acted foolishly: he prays that the fall of the flesh be burnt out: so that he may

once more be found pure in God's sight, and be filled with the joy of salvation: nor ever again relapse to evil deeds. This cleanness of heart is a ladder most straight, most glorious, most strong, touching the summit of Heaven, and reaching to the vision of the glory of God: this glory is to all His saints.

O most beautiful Jesus, Author of all purity, Who hast promised eternal joys to the clean of heart: grant me ever to possess this virtue, chosen and precious, brighter than gems and gold: so that with all contagion of sin far removed, with a free mind I may pleasingly serve Thee in the frail flesh; and utterly cast away whatever may hinder purity: and with all my desires strive to cleave to Thee, as long as I live, a poor wretch, amid the storms of the world: until Thou dost bid me stand in Thy sight: and then according to Thy great mercy do Thou deign to be merciful unto me.

XVI

Of the Love of Jesus and Self-Denial

He that loveth his life: shall lose it. These words speaketh the most loving Jesus: desirous to part thee from the cares and pleasures of the world. Lo, love and loss. The eternal Word of the Father declares it: He does not deceive thee, but He looks to thy salvation. The love of the world is the loss: the love of Jesus, the redemption of the soul. The love of the flesh is folly: the love of Jesus, wisdom. The love of the creature lessens the love of the Creator: the love of the Creator gives leave to all creatures to go their way. For John, 12. 25.

they do not savour the same: nor rightly agree. Self-love is full of fear and anguish: self-denial, ineffable freedom. Self-love is an interior malady: which is seldom cured, unless God be loved perfectly. Self-contempt is a sign of salvation; and he who commences with self-contempt: will be made perfect in the love of Jesus. Self-love darkens the heart, begets strife, and destroys progress. But who denies himself for the sake of Jesus: he is free and at peace. The love of Jesus is safe and strong: it knows not the soft and self-seekers. The love of Jesus gives all that it is and has: nor seeks save what it knows to be pleasing to God. If thou wilt be fully cleansed and enlightened in spirit: despise thyself and all things for Jesus' sake. Let every great thing in the world be nothing to thee, every pleasant thing bitter: that God alone and sweet Jesus may be sweet to thee above all things. What is in truth the love of Jesus, if not contempt of thyself and all things for the sake of His love? And this it is that finds itself, and every good in God. Thou wilt save thy soul: despise now the present life. If now thou wilt hold on to the rough way: thou shalt go into eternal life. The word of denial, and of the loss of the present life seems hard to the carnal and worldly; but to the lovers of Christ it savours sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb: because true self-denial for God's sake makes ready an everlasting kingdom. The love of Jesus can bear present evils: and is strong to break from temporal ease. It fears not to be held in small esteem: and desires not honours. It can hold its peace in face of insults: nor thinks of returning the like to them that injure it. The love of Jesus possesses an invisible consolation:

it awaits a fruit that will never wither. "I," He saith, "have chosen you from the world, calling by My grace: that you should go out from yourselves, abandoning your own will: and bring forth the fruit of charity, loving Me above all things: and that your fruit should remain, reigning with Me in eternal blessedness." But the fruit of the flesh is death: which the worm that dieth not follows and everlasting fire. From which may He protect us, Who has taught us to despise the world, and overcome the flesh: Christ Jesus, our love and our redemption. Amen. John, 15. 16.

XVII

Of following the Poverty of Jesus, and casting aside Care for Temporal Things

THE *foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.* This word of Jesus is frequently to be pondered by thee, and carefully set in thy heart: who dost affect to lead a religious life. Jesus commends to thee the nobility of His holy poverty, whereby is gained the kingdom of Heaven: which also He Himself poor in the world chose and most strictly observed. Yea, He desires thee to seek no earthly comfort: for neither did He have any temporal repose here: nor built Himself on earth a material home to shelter Him. The animals have their dens to retire, and the birds their nests or crevices to rest: but Jesus set up for Himself no tents at all: nor secured for Himself, by means of another, lodging or board. But He lived as a poor beggar: He passed the way of the world as Matt. 8. 20

a pilgrim in haste: He departed as a stranger from a foreign land. The eternal Wisdom built not itself a house made of hands in the towns or cities, nor rented in the fertile places outside the city; but content with the common lodging of His friends, He followed the simplicity of the poor in all things: and nowhere took pleasure in the lofty tents of sinners. But what was given Him for His sustenance; this He placed in the common fund: and entrusted to the keeping of another. He desired to have nothing of His own for Himself: and used sparingly those things that natural need required. If perchance aught remained over of gifts or food: this He had distributed to the poor. Likewise He forbade superfluous care for things to His perfect followers: but to weaker brethren with considerate gentleness He allowed the necessaries of life.

Matt. 17. 4. Peter once urged Him to build three tabernacles, when, beside himself, he enjoyed the heavenly vision on the mount, delighted with the resplendent presence of Christ and the company of holy Moses and Elias: but because he begged what was less befitting, in this petition he was not heard; for the dwelling of Christ and the blessed is not in earthly tabernacles, nor in corporeal images: but in the happy mansion of the heavenly kingdom, which surpasses all sense and thought of mortal men. And indeed the Maker of Heaven and earth, Jesus, called the carpenter's son, could easily build a house or temple to His name even without ax or adze: but the heavenly master and artificer of all the virtues did not come down to the depths for the sake of reforming material things; for He took thought, not of stocks and stones, nor of oxen and sheep, nor of

farms and rents: but of healing, instructing, and redeeming souls. However, He declared His power by more mighty works, accomplishing cures by a light touch or a single word; He also taught wisdom by good deed and discourse: speaking of the kingdom of God, warning against the perishing joys of the world: He gathered the simple and lowly, and the proud rich He sent empty away.

Do thou also therefore lay aside all useless anxiety for temporal things, nor occupy thyself excessively with resources for the future: but cast thy thought upon the Lord and think on heavenly things. Neither toil eagerly for the necessaries of life: that later thou mayest have abundance. Leave others also to work for themselves: that they may have whereby to live. Labour rather for thy soul and for acquiring grace: than that the flesh be well nourished, which is to be devoured by worms. See that thou sweat not too much for temporalities: and neglect thyself in spiritual exercises. It is well to seek the common good: but the spiritual rather than the earthly. It is well to eat bread in the sweat of the brow: but be not unmindful of the heavenly bread. "Make use of thy own labour in the days of thy vanity," saith the Wise One: "lest perchance thou leavest all to an idle and ungrateful man." Thou canst not alone enrich all posterity: nor guard against all losses. Endeavour rather to leave after thee an example of virtue: than a sufficiency of worldly income. How knowest whether it is expedient for thee and others to have more? Do not desire what is unsafe. For the desire will never be sated: nor is cupidity ended by the value of things. Do thou follow the poverty of Christ; and be content with the modera-

Eccl. 2. 10, 21.

tion of nature: for the love of Him, Who would not have either farms, or rents, or coffers, or houses. Alack, many waste their days in useless anxiety; little or seldom turn themselves to interior things: and become utterly insensible within. Lift up thy heart: cleave not with the brute beasts to things of the earth. Thou art to be fed with the food of angels: the word of God is the nourishment of souls. This is the bread of life which the Lord Jesus shall give thee: lest thou faint in the wilderness. The good and loving Master Who has promised things eternal: will not deny the temporal. Do thou seek the heavenly things: and He doubtless will add what is necessary, whilst thou art in this life.

XVIII

Of the Weariness of Jesus and His Saving Doctrine

John, 4. 6. JESUS, *being wearied with His journey: sat on the well.* The most patient Jesus deigned to be wearied for us. He did not use a carriage or a chariot or a horse, when He walked the earth: but in the name of the Lord He went on foot. Once we read He mounted an ass, and for a short space rode on an ass: rather as a pattern of humility than for the enjoyment of ease: not to gain honour: but to fulfil the word of the prophet. He showed therefore a good example to holy preachers and religious persons, that they travel not with pomp on horseback; nor incur heavy expenses on their journey: lest they scandalize seculars, and give rise to complaints in their

monasteries. Give heed here, religious brother, to Jesus wearied with His journey: not passing along to walk about for recreation. And if it is necessary to take recreation, go not out into the public places nor a long distance: lest by thy wandering thou give offence to others. But turn aside into the portion of the lot of the saints, where thou mayest hear the word of God: or behold examples of holiness. He spends an evil recreation: who loses joy of conscience. He is very empty within and possessed of little devotion: who is found willingly ready to wander abroad. Esau, a man skilled in hunting, while he tarries outside in the field: is deprived of his hereditary rights. But Jacob, a simple man and abiding in the tent, while he humbly obeys his mother, and restrains his feet from wandering: with wondrous readiness receives his father's blessing. The skilful one is deceived in his ways, placing his hope in bow and quiver: the simple man, intent on God, the man without plaint, was aided in his need. They are wont to be slow for excursions and worldly business: who have a more diligent care for their interior. But slothful minds are dissipated daily: and are brought to loss of mastery over themselves by frequency of cares, or the violence of troubles. He, who wishes to be cured of this wandering, and to recover the light of the heart: let him be earnestly on the watch: ponder the end of his days, and the hour of the severe judgement.

Learn also in this act of Jesus: that virtue is to be exercised with discretion. For to be wearied in the community toil, at the call of charity, or the mandate of obedience: is a sign of virtue and of no little merit. But to pause at a befitting

time, and refresh the body with food, or instruct the soul by sacred reading: is the discreet ruling of both inner and outer man. Weariness then for the Saviour's name should be bearable, and not shunned by the devout: since multitudes almost beyond number weary themselves for the world. But let the toil be discreet, lest it break down our weakness: or render us unfit for things divine. For what is moderate: endures better. It is right well lawful at times to go and sit a while for the renewal of one's strength: and to be mindful of one's own weakness. For Jesus Himself after the weariness of the journey sat on the well: awaiting food, and humbly asking for a drink of water.

In this place of the well we should also consider the doctrine of Jesus, profitable for the moral life. It teaches thee what thou shouldst do when thou givest over toiling: and what kind of recreation is to be sought. For, even if thou canst not labour longer, it is not becoming to give ear to idle stories, or take pleasure in sleep: or wander about through the offices. What then? Thou shouldst sit on the well; seek the comfort of the spirit: and with the Samaritan woman eagerly beg the gifts of saving wisdom. Look into the streams of holy Writ, and turn over what thou hast read; that thou mayest renew thy soul, cast off sloth: avoid idleness, and acquire fresh compunction. Let the tongue be silent without: that the mind may be nourished within. Weary not of praying often: and meditating on the loving Jesus. Learn to pass from material to interior things: and to rise from creatures to the praise of the Creator. For thus also did Jesus Himself. For taking occasion of this earthly well, and the

question of the woman, who happened to come: He began to preach the word of salvation, and to pour out a stream of heavenly grace. She sought the water of the well: but carried away rejoicing the doctrine of life from the heavenly torrent. So refreshed and delighted was she with the discourse of the most sweet Jesus: that, forgetting her pitcher, she ran to tell her townspeople the wonderful works of God. And this is a sign of a great grace gained; when a man, reading, praying and meditating, is so touched: that unmindful of present ease, he burns wholly in the love of the fountain of life. Of which holy David with thirsting breast thus sings, "My soul hath thirsted after God, the living spring."[1] Ps. 41. 3.

Again, when the disciples, coming from the city, urged Jesus to eat: He showed that the bread of obedience, which most agreeably nourishes the soul subject to God, is to be preferred to all bodily food. There is indeed no drink sweeter than heavenly grace; which cleanses the defiled, waters the parched: and refreshes the tempted. Nor is any more delicious food tasted, or richer banquet placed before the eyes of the lover, than the fulfilment of the will of Heaven: as the most obedient Jesus Himself saith, "My meat is: to do the will of Him that sent Me." John, 4. 34. For to seek the good pleasure of God in what is to be done, is sweet above all else to the lover: and nourishes the obedient disciple well and refreshes with spiritual joy because of the merit of obedience. Thus Elias penetrating the vast wilderness, and willingly remaining by himself, instructed by the angel arose and eat: and while he fulfilled the command of the angel: he walked in 3 Kings, 19. 4-8.

[1] The Vulgate has *fortem vivum*, not *fontem vivum*.

the strength of that food unto the mount of God. For true obedience leads with little toil to the summit of perfection, to the mount of eternal rest: where there is full refreshment from all heat and toil, and possession of entire blessedness in the presence of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, with the enjoyment of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

XIX

Of the Writing of Jesus and His Mercy towards the Sinful Woman

John, 8. 6. *UT Jesus bowing Himself down: wrote with His finger on the ground.* The lovable Jesus, gentle teacher, true master, just judge, and compassionate Saviour, is narrated to be a writer: Who wrote not with ink, but with His finger on the ground. A good writer, Who wrote out mercy for the poor: and granted pardon to the sinner. Nor did He act contrary to the law: when He tempered the severity of the law. For the miserable need mercy: and justly is forgiveness granted to the truly penitent. O how beautiful a writing, and how skilled is this finger of God: when it soothed with words of clemency the sinner steeped in sorrow: and wisely silenced the malicious conspirators, eager for vengeance, unyielding to mercy: and by His words showed them to be
John, 8. 7. worthy of confusion, saying, "He that is without sin among you: let him first cast a stone at her." This against the accusers: and for the deliverance of the penitent from the mouth of the wolves. And now, good Jesus, what sayest Thou

to the woman? Guilty of sin she awaits a good word, pronounce Thy sentence; she submits herself to Thy judgement: give a comforting answer. As Thou hast ever been wont to have compassion: so also now. "Neither will I," He saith, "condemn thee." What could be more gentle and more liberal unto the granting of forgiveness? Be consoled, guilty conscience: listen to the word of such loving compassion. If God be for thee, who shall stand against thee? Christ Jesus it is, Who justifies: who is he that shall condemn? And what wilt thou do further; what wilt thou offer in compensation for thy sin? Thou repentest of the crime committed: but a greater care is to be taken against future sins, before thou departest. "Go," saith the most gentle Jesus: "and now sin no more." What could be shorter, and more full unto remission: and to the satisfaction of perfect penance? Who knows hearts: He knew how much sorrow the sinful woman had. Jesus therefore used more abundant clemency, lest she should be overwhelmed by too grievous a sadness: who, having been publicly accused, suffered great shame for her fault.

John, 8. 11.

John, 8. 11.

Thou hast heard the clemency of the Saviour with its great consolation for sinners: strive thou also to acknowledge thy faults, and worthily to bewail them before, seized by the most wicked spirits, thou be forced in the future judgement to render an account of all. Say with the publican, "O God be merciful to me a sinner." Nor distrust the mercy of the Redeemer: if only for the future thou desirest with all thy strength to guard against thy past sins: and perfectly to amend thy life.

Luke, 18. 13.

Consider also in this act of Jesus, what He did

by writing. Nor wonder that He knew how to
John, 7. 15. write: nor ask with the Jews, whence He learnt to read and write: since He learnt not letters from man. Such questioning is foolish; and a lying, fictitious insinuation concerning the school of Jesus: for the Wisdom of God needed not the teaching of man, Who was born into this world to enlighten all the sons of men. And it was not merely easy to Him to read and write of Himself: but also of a sudden without any noise of words to render unlettered men, the Apostles namely, most skilled in all knowledge of tongues. And what wonder, if the Author of life fully knew the characters invented by mortals: Who most clearly beholds the secretest things of hearts and mysteries hidden from the ages. However it is pleasant to hear that Jesus knew how to read, and wrote: that the art of writing and the love of reading holy books may give greater delight. Which art many of the saints learnt; and with mouth and hand most diligently exercised, during their life in the flesh: and they very greatly enlightened holy Church by their writings. Jesus therefore was a splendid teacher, an excellent preacher; author and lover of the Scriptures: exemplary in conduct, edifying in words, and wondrous in signs. Let it please thee therefore to imitate Jesus reading, writing, and fulfilling the other observances of holy religion; so that thou mayest edify others by living worthily to God: who art not suited for preaching. A VERY GOOD WORK it is to write books which Jesus loves: in which He is studied, read, and preached. And there is no doubt that thou shalt be loved by Him and richly rewarded: if thou diligently write books for the Church to the honour of God, and

the profit of the neighbour. If he lose not his reward, who offers a cup of cold water to the thirsty man; what great reward shall he receive, who, by writing, provides the water of saving wisdom for the soul, which is to live for ever? For as many letters as thou dost duly form: so many victims of praise dost thou offer to God. It is meritorious therefore and devout to labour at writing books, and to keep them in great reverence and careful custody; by means of which the Divine Office is daily celebrated: and whereby the seed of manifold instruction is sown. Matt. 10. 42.

For sacred books are the weapons of clerics, the ornament of churches: the wealth and treasure of doctors, the bugle of priests; the comfort of religious, the banquet of the devout, the legacy of the saints: the light of the faithful, the nursery of virtues, the organ of the Holy Ghost. To write books then is a labour pleasing to God, to read them is profitable, to teach them praiseworthy: to preach them wholesome. But who would read, or preach unless he first knew the writings of the saints: and unless a writer had first written them? Blessed then the hand of the writer: and blessed the fingers engaged in such toil. By His example Jesus teaches thee, writing on the ground: that thou also mayest willingly write the words of God; which while one reads, and another preaches: thou shalt gain a very great reward from the manifold fruit of the labours of thy hands. By the gift of Our Lord Jesus Christ the Rewarder of all the good; with Whom all the hairs of our head are numbered: and not a single letter written can be lost. Ah, happily, amen.

XX

Of keeping Humility from the consideration of our own Weakness

Luke, 17. 10. *HEN you have done all the things that are commanded you: say, "We are unprofitable servants."* The present word of Our Lord Jesus Christ instructs us much to the guarding of humility: and to the shutting out of all vain glory and swelling. It especially warns the desirous of high places, to be mindful of their own weakness and negligence; and not to boast of their deeds, although well done according to the judgement of men; but, fearful of the judgement of God above them, rather humbly to implore His mercy: than presume on their own merits. For thus the holy and humble David, tremblingly calls to God:

Ps. 142. 2. "Enter not into judgement with Thy servant: for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified." See how base should be thy esteem of thyself: how seriously thou shouldst fear the judgement of Heaven: who art far from the holiness of David, the great King and prophet. Neither king, nor prophet, nor holy, nor chosen according to God's heart: hast thou ever merited to be called as was he. He, however, fulfilled the word of Our Lord, acknowledging himself an unprofitable servant: even calling himself an insect, a dog and a worm: having no high thought of himself after his mighty deeds. Bring back to memory the evils thou hast perpetrated: the vices of the present, the dangers of the future: and thou shalt not be by any means high-minded: but shalt rather fear, and declare thyself base and useless. God has no

need of thy service, even if thou dost well; nor wilt thou worthily please Him: unless thou know thyself unworthy and unprofitable. "When," He says, "you have done all the things that are commanded you: say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'" If when thou hast done all the things that are commanded, thou must say this, and hast no right to glory in aught; how vile and unworthy must thou think thyself, when thou failest and fallest short in so many things daily: and scarcely bringest anything to perfection. When hast thou been able for one day or hour, to live so uprightly and guardedly in the sight of God and men: as to overlook nothing of those things that it behoved thee and became thee to do? So great is human weakness: that these things do not escape defilement even that are praised in the judgement of men as just. Put aside therefore all vain complacency and pride: and take heed of the abundance of thy own unprofitableness. Be mindful of the depravity and inconstancy of thy thoughts; and thou shalt find that thou art not only useless unto good: but liable to much evil, and worthy of reproach and punishment. But this is the only remedy and comfort for the troubled spirit: that for such numberless negligences and sinful stains, a man humble himself in truth, and esteem himself inferior to all and useless; carefully redeeming his past sins and daily negligences with the coin of confession and the shield of a good will: and often being instant in devout prayer. Set thyself then manfully against inrushing vice: for so much does a man make progress in virtue: as he the more sternly detests and vanquishes his vices. And although thou oft be tempted and fall: nevertheless thou shouldst endeavour to rise again,

Luke, 17. 10.

and take up thy good resolve with greater watch-
Ps. 118. 106. fulness: and with the prophet say, "I have sworn and determined, to keep the judgements of Thy justice." As often therefore as thou fallest short of thy conceived purpose, and hast no strength to march forward; by no means lose heart, or be downcast: but trusting in the Lord, with all
Ps. 118. 117. humility and great insistence cry and pray, "Help me and I shall be saved: and I will meditate always on Thy justifications."

XXI

Passion Sunday. Of lamenting over Our Lord's Passion

Lament. 1. 12. *ALL ye that pass by the way: attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow.* Now the memory of Our Lord's Passion is celebrated in holy Church: and it is befitting that the children of the Church compassionate their Lord: Who for them deigned to die in the body: that they might live in both body and soul for all eternity. Let them then not be ungrateful, or regard themselves as strangers; but lovingly remember that they themselves are the Church and Spouse of Christ, who are called her children: if however they have cleaved to Christ with filial love and the single devotion of faith. O how great a charity of the sovereign Father; how great a love of the only-begotten Son of God: how great a benignity of the Holy Ghost hath overflowed on the whole human race. What shalt thou say to this, my soul? Wilt thou be ungrateful; or canst thou be unmindful of so great a love? How canst thou

neglect Him; by Whom thou wast so diligently sought out? How couldst thou not love Him in turn; Who has so ardently loved thee? Love Him Who loves thee and loves thee so strongly; that He chose to endure death: rather than thou shouldst be lost. This is the love greater than which no man has had: and so He fully satisfied for all.

But what shalt thou do; and what shalt thou render to the Lord for His death? It behoves thee to do something: although thou canst not repay Him a worthy recompense. For every creature and all the saints suffice not to thank God worthily for His death: which He willingly underwent for thee. Recall to mind then His holy Passion, and according to thy measure strive to imitate it; for this is to render Him great thanks: cheerfully to desire to suffer tribulations for Him. Draw then thy mind away from outward things: and turn thy whole thought to the image of thy crucified Lord. For by this thou wilt be able the easier to shut out other images from thy mind: and also, by the impression of this holy image, the more patiently to endure all bodily pains. And since now according to the season it beseems the Church to think of the Lord's Passion: therefore to it thou shouldst more intently direct thy exercises. If the preceding days of fast have passed heedlessly: at least now, in this fortnight, let fresh devotion inflame thee, because of the Passion of Christ. And if thou rememberest that thou hast done anything well: add still better to what is passed. Be now more earnest and fervent; for so the memory of Our Lord's Passion demands: and the compassion taken up by the whole Church for the death of her

Saviour. Let it not be burdensome or wearisome to think over the bitter Passion of Christ: which He was ready to endure for thee. Each of these days gather and carry away a bunch of myrrh from the vine of the Lord of Sabaoth, which place between thy breasts for the custody of thy heart: for thence breathes the odour of life: and if thou chew it well, thou shalt receive wondrous strength amidst trials and reproaches. Indeed it has been proved by many and experienced, that, exercising themselves oft in the Passion of the Saviour, His holy stripes and blessed wounds have savoured so sweetly to them, that they have overflowed with tears from vehement sorrow: and by an exceeding great affection of love and compassion, they have been strongly inflamed to endure even insults and sufferings for the love of Christ. What shall I say, that some led beyond themselves, and wholly changed from self-love, longed to enter the interior of Jesus, to experience His utter emptying-out, even to the death of the Cross; heartily desiring to be humbled and despised by all creatures: that Christ alone might be glorified in their hearts, and they themselves only contemned. So burning is it, the blood of Christ poured out through love; that it mightily inflames him that deeply meditates thereon, and makes him so forgetful of self, as to deem contempt joy: and to regard as nothing the things that are painful to the body. For thus the ardent lover commences to be made like his dear beloved through sufferings: while he wholly and freely abandons himself to Him: Who for his redemption spared Himself in nought. Hence springs a very strong love, most grateful comfort is received, a singular devotion grows; carnal affection dies, the spirit is

raised in God: the understanding is enlightened: and the word of the prophet is realized, saying: "And my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it." Ps. 32. 5. But because this is very great and difficult, nor attainable to any man of himself: therefore, my soul, beg, seek, and knock; that the most kind Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost and power, rich unto all that call upon Him, may mercifully open unto thee this excellent treasure, which He hath hidden in Himself: and make the most precious unction of devotion flow from His sacred wounds to thee; so that thou also mayest learn to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone: Deut. 32. 13. which is concealed from the proud, but shown to humble and devout hearts; veiled from the carnal and them that savour earthly things: but oft granted to be tasted by the pure and simple. This is the wondrous disposition of God; that the meek and humble take: what the elated and curious cannot take. Thou seest how many read much, examine the sublime, and seek the subtle; but have little or almost no devotion to the Passion of Christ; because they pour themselves out on exterior things, and seek to be comforted in things of earth; therefore is their heart within made dry and tasteless: and they cannot experience the things that are Jesus Christ's. They are engaged in many things: and edified in few. They overlook the profitable, omit the necessary: love the subtle, despise the simple; are carried away to divers matters, and examine everything that is new: and not even thus find rest, or are satiated with what they hear; for as long as they seek not Jesus by His Passion and Cross: they will assuredly not attain true interior sweetness and the knowledge of His Godhead.

For Jesus alone opens the way to His Divinity, by His most sacred humanity. Which blessed
Col. 2. 3. Paul knew well when he said: that in Him are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. And therefore, leaving aside words of earthly wisdom: he exercised himself in the
1 Cor. 2. 2. life and Passion of Christ. "For I judged not myself to know anything among you: but Jesus and Him crucified."

Take heed to this, my soul; and, leaving aside curious things and all vanities: direct the interior eye of the heart to Jesus crucified. For the present watch diligently, and with Jesus on Mount Olivet pray to the Father; that as He was given the chalice of His blessed Passion to drink: so to thee also be granted an ardent affection to compassionate Him lovingly. For thou shalt find more in the wounds of Jesus Christ: than in the possession of the whole world. And the Passion of Christ alone will bring thee greater wonder of mind: than the contemplation of all created things. This I say then, that thou mayest have greater fervour towards the Passion of Christ; meditate thereon more intently: yea, pass not a single hour or day without the memory thereof. For whatever thou dost read or hear in other words or deeds of the saints, this thou shalt find much more fully and deliciously in the life and Passion of Christ. Indeed the venerable Passion of Christ surpasses the sufferings of all the saints in many ways: since all the sufferings of all the saints are sanctified by the Passion of Christ alone: and are made acceptable to God and meritorious by His death. For He is the Saint of Saints, Who has power to forgive men their sins; Who renders all their works pleasing: and

delivered Himself as a holy sacrifice to God, unto the remission of all sins.

But three ways in particular the Passion of Christ far surpasses the sufferings of His elect, namely in dignity, and bitterness: and fruit or profit. In dignity excels the person of the sufferer: since He was the Son of God. In bitterness is considered the dreadful rending of His body: for it was of a most exquisite and tender complexion. And in the fruit is seen the redemption of the human race; since by His death, which He underwent without guilt, He freed us from eternal death: and merited for us the entry to heavenly blessedness and glory. And so by the prophet He thus invites all the faithful to consider the greatness of His suffering, saying, "O all ye that pass by the way: attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." Lament. 1. 12.

Alas, alas, O Lord, how many pass before Thee heedlessly; with dry eyes and unmoved heart they pass by Thy image: barely do they look on the cross from afar; without reverence or genuflexion they hurry through the churches: they haste rather to go out than to come in; it gives them more pleasure to chatter than to pray: the world draws more agreeably to the market-place, than the divine and heavenly chanting to the choir; scarcely can they bide a short while in Thy praise: although Thou didst hang upon the cross, filled with many sorrows and reproaches, a long space of hours for their salvation. Where are our eyes, O Lord; and whither have we sent away our ears, that we give no heed to Thee? Convert us to Thee: for very soon are we turned away from Thee. Speedily we forget Thy great love: which Thou hast shown us in Thy blessed Passion. Thou

hast suffered so much, things so grievous and shameful, and without any guilt, for men, from men, whom Thou Thyself didst create; from Thy own race and people, on whom of old and in the present time Thou hast bestowed so many benefits: and still we remain hard and ungrateful. The insensible elements indeed were in commotion at Thy death: and the hearts of the children of men are unmoved. Alas for me, wretched and unhappy, for the sterility and insensibility of my heart; that I am so soon moved by a slight injury: and am nowise touched by such insults of my Lord Jesus Christ. I feel a small hurt of my body: and I ponder not the most terrible pains of my Lord. How little a love is made manifest: since the Head is grievously wounded, and the heart feels no grief thereat. If we are members one of another; why have I no compassion, and why is not my heart broken with sorrow? O my Lord, what shall I say to this; and what shall I do, wretch that I am? Why am I sometimes more speedily moved for a mortal man; than for Thee, my Creator and immortal Spouse? Why does the curiosity of vain things excite me more; than Thy hanging for me on the cross? For this I deeply grieve, that these things pass not more to my heart: nor wholly wound me, as they justly should. For shame, that I am so easily ready to laughter; so sensible to my own loss: and so slow and dry to weep the most bitter Passion of my Lord. And if sometimes I put on compunction: too speedily again I drop it: therefore I do not progress, and do not perfectly attain interior savour. Ah my God, that I should hear such good things of Thee, and do nothing worthy: I read that Thou didst endure such heavy torments: and still I find myself rather hard

than softened. This is not a sign of perfect love: nor a token of loving compassion. How long shall I be insensible; and without sympathy with the Sufferer?

O now, most beloved and faithful Jesus, pallid and hanging on the cross: only hope of the desolate soul; grant me at this sacred season, worthily to celebrate the memory of Thy holy Passion: and by loving compassion to pass into Thy open wounds; where forgetful of myself, and mindful only of Thy sorrow, I may no longer faint in any tribulation: but freely resign myself to Thy will. How can I know or think that I love Thee; except by the suffering of afflictions for Thy name? For willingly to suffer from love, and to be able to bear every burden without complaint: is the sweetest recompense that a man can offer Thee. For herein are known THE TRUE LOVERS of the cross: namely in the WILLING endurance of every grief. And although Thou art now impassible, and open to no suffering, but crowned with glory and honour, and raised above all the heavens: to me however it is profitable and a great help, to be mindful in my sufferings of Thy blessed Passion: to look on Thee, as if still passible in the flesh: namely, taken prisoner and bound, stripped of Thy garments, derided, spat upon, struck, whipped with scourges, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; given to drink of vinegar and gall, pierced with the lance, condemned with robbers, insulted, blasphemed, despised, abandoned, reprobate of all: and finally dead upon the cross, and tearfully buried. I must not pass over even one point: but from the grove of the gospel I will faithfully gather all Thy words and actions; and not only will I consider Thy wonderful works, but much more fondly

will I embrace in meditation Thy sufferings and reproaches: for these are more needful to me unto salvation. Thy signs, glorious Jesus, instruct me in the faith and veneration of Thy holy name: but Thy reproaches and hard blows, received for me, incite and inflame me more to loving endurance, to humility and perfect charity. But he, who reverences only Thy signs, and considers solely Thy greatness, must be very careful: lest he be scandalized by the contemplation of Thy shameful death. Thou art to be admired indeed in the works wrought by divine power, and for these to be praised above all; but nevertheless Thou hast not disdained patiently to bear insults and curses: and so much the more Thou shouldst be loved.

Note this therefore, faithful soul: AND BE GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR ALL THESE THINGS. The poor and HUMBLE JESUS ought to comfort thee in every strait and tribulation: Who in His greatest need was forsaken of GOD and men. Thou art not greater than thy Master, slothful and unprofitable servant: nor more innocent than Christ, O Christian. If He bore so much for thee; what shalt thou do for thyself, and what shalt thou worthily render Him? If also He was thus forsaken and given over to contempt, Who was the dearly beloved Son: why art thou saddened, if sometimes thou art abandoned and despised, who art so unworthy a servant? Look upon thy heavenly pattern, thy constant memorial. O beautiful and most dear Jesus, Son of God; which shall I the more admire in Thee, the sublime or the lowly? And which shall I remark rather; the worthy or the unworthy? But better and with greater truth both together. I see Thee beauteous and noble in the divine nature: but disfigured and despised

in the form of man. The former Thou remainest for ever: the latter Thou didst suffer for a time. Moreover to my spirit also within Thou art beautiful and lovable, pure and inviolable: because a stranger to all sin: although outwardly Thou appearest defaced and wounded. Because of my sins Thou wast begrimed, and stricken, and crucified. Perchance the bodily eyes of the foolish and the proud are scandalized: not however of the loving and pious; but rather they compassionate and weep: who love Thee in truth. With such I desire to live: who, loving Thee with their whole heart, follow even to the shame of the cross. Thou art not a stumbling-block to me: but the greatest honour and joy. For Thy disfigurement is my comeliness; Thy stripes and every wound, the healing of my soul: and Thy death, my life. In these I live and in such the life of my spirit; Thou shalt reprove me, if I be not mindful of Thee: if I set not THY PASSION AS THE COMMENCEMENT OF MY JOY. For I know that Thou art the Holy One of God, Who hast willed to suffer these things: and I believe that for my sins Thou hast cheerfully borne them.

Weeping therefore, I will weep day and night; and my tears shall be on my cheeks: for the sorrow and bitter Passion of my Lord. David lamented with great lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan; and shall I not lament the death of my Lord, my King? Jacob, seeing the coat of Joseph his son, rent his garment with weeping: and can I cease weeping, contemplating the dolorous death of my Lord? Joseph also seeing Benjamin, his brother by the same mother, standing before him: immediately his heart was moved, and he made haste and wept, and could not refrain

2 Kings, 1. 17.

Gen. 37. 33, 34.

Gen. 43. 29, 30.

Gen. 45. 1.

himself from tears; and shall I, hearing of the cruel death of my Lord, be without tears? Let no man urge me to this; let no man forbid me grief and mourning: otherwise he will but torment me more. My Lord shed for me His precious blood; and shall I not shed for Him a little weeping? Would that I could so lament: as to be able to move all men also together with me. It is not given to all to weep: but it is a gift of the devout mind to mourn from inner compassion for her Lord; not for the sake of her own satisfaction: but to merit His greater favour.

O most dearly beloved Jesus, brightness of eternal glory; how dost Thou thus set, Sun of Justice? may my soul compassionate Thee; and from great affection of pity may the hardness of my heart be broken: and may it be intimately occupied to-day with the memory of Thy Passion. In the spirit of humility and in a contrite soul, may it faithfully stand before thee: and in every place of Thy Passion go with Thee, and sorrowfully give heed to all that Thou dost suffer; ardently long also to suffer and to die with Thee: considering what David said of his son Absalom,

2 Kings, 18. 33. "Who would grant me," he said, "to die for thee my son Absalom, Absalom my son?" Loving affection at the death of his son, in arms against him, was strong in David: so that he vehemently lamented his death, and desired to die for him, who attempted to take his life: how much stronger should the grief of deep compassion be in me: over Thy guiltless death, consummated for me upon the cross. It ought to touch me more that Thou wast crucified and didst die for me: than if the whole world had been given me and spent for me. MAY MY SOUL THEREFORE DIE A

BLESSED DEATH: and may my last end be like that of my Lord. Grant, O Lord, a happy hour of death: and to find blissful repose in Thee. It will be better for me to die now with Thee: than to live one hour longer without Thee. If this be denied: I will do what devout affection is wont to do. I will seek privacy: and chiefly for this end that I may lament the more freely. I will be mindful, O Lord, of Thy death: and with the inner lips of the heart I will kiss again and again the scars of all Thy wounds. Let no man speak to me this day: let no man trouble me with any solace, nor suggest any relaxation; for I will not receive comfort from any creature: lest I be hindered from mourning the most bitter Passion of my Lord. Depart, depart, friends and strangers; leave me to sit desolate and alone: that I may lament a while my Beloved, crucified for me. Let tears in my head fail for sorrow: and let there be none to wipe them, or to console me, save Him, Whom I mourn. Weep with me, sun and moon, and lament with me, all ye creatures: for our Lord is slain this day. And it is befitting that all things should be plunged in grief, while the Author of nature suffers: and that all should put on sadness: while the Son of God endures such anguish. I can speak no more, but I find relief only in weeping: for my God, crying out with a loud voice, gives up the ghost. Go forth, go forth, most abundant tears: and gush out even to exhaustion. Fall upon the slain body of my beloved Lord: and merit for me the inner sight of the heart: that I may sometime deserve to see Him in joy: Whom now with loving lament I mourn crucified. Let His tomb be to me a place of peace and repose: so that His glorious resur-

rection may be the end of all sorrow and sadness. Amen.

XXII

Of the Cross of Jesus, which He bore for us

John, 19. 16, 17.

ND they took Jesus and led Him forth: and bearing His own cross, He went forth into that place which is called Calvary. It is well to ponder this sorrowful journey of our Lord: and with the pious eye of the mind to look upon this so tearful a sight. Behold the innocent Jesus, weighed down beneath the burden of the cross, is led forth between two thieves: and, alas, is dragged with shouting to the public gallows. He embraces the wood of shame with the arms of His love; He sets to it His back torn with scourges, and His holy shoulder: and all the enfeebled members of His body. He bears the unmerited load, He takes up the unaccustomed yoke: He carries it to the place appointed Him: that He may gain the fruit of our salvation, to cure the poison of eternal death.

A great laughing-stock to the wicked: but a sacred mystery to all the faithful. To the evil a witness of perdition: because they crucify the Innocent; but to the good a symbol of salvation: because they compassionate Him and mourn. Their laughter shall be turned to weeping: but the groaning of these shall be changed into joy. The meek Lord proceeds on the way of shame with wondrous gentleness; willingly He passes out through the gate of Jerusalem, over which He wept on the day of palms: He bears with

patience the derision of His hanging, inflicted on Him by His own nation. He protests not of the injuries done Him: He resists not, goaded on violently from behind. He summons not the angels to His aid: nor begs the assistance of His friends; but He goes on without delay, readily He obeys the evil-minded. Alone He bears His most heavy burden: alone He suffers the reproach of shame; but He does not desire alone the joy of honour: because He wishes to bestow on all that believe in Him the merit of His Passion. He is not withdrawn from the way of the cross by affection for His Mother, nor hindered by the tears of His friends: He is not disturbed by the clamours of them that accompany Him, nor moved by the shouts of them that hate Him: He is not retarded by weariness of body from the task He has begun: nor overwhelmed by the storms of scandals. Alone and that most constantly He perseveres: free and with peaceful heart He stretches forward to the agony of His punishment: as esteeming little the glory of the world, so also bearing its shame with equanimity: persisting ever in the praise of the eternal Father: shutting out no man from His love: but with eager desire longing to fulfil the precept of the Father, ordained from eternity: and to consummate the work of man's reparation laid upon Him by His Passion and cross.

In this noble example He now shows: what before He wholesomely taught in word: "Who wishes to come after Me," He said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Lo, thou hast thy guide on the rough way, Jesus the Son of God: the captain and teacher to the nations to deliver them. Follow then,

faithful servant, thy Lord: disciple, follow thy Master; imitate, frail member, thy glorious Head: that by His guidance thou mayest attain the kingdom of eternal bliss. If thou desirest prosperity and peace: fear not adversity. Follow, sinner, the Just; man, thy God, creature, thy Creator: exile, thy Redeemer. Cast away earthly fear, put on strength: strive as a good soldier, overcoming nature. The cross is the way to salvation: suffering is the road to the crown. Be not ashamed of the shame of Christ: if thou wilt contemplate the glorious countenance of Christ. For thee He bears this cross: for thee He undergoes also the death of the cross. He gives thee an example of endurance: He smoothes by His feet the way of roughness: He shows that the shame of the cross is not to be shunned, but embraced. The humble Jesus bears His cross for the wicked, that He may sanctify the wicked: He suffers torments for vile slaves: that He may make them co-heirs of His kingdom. Who would not now desire to bear the reproaches and contempt of men: when the innocent Christ endured from men things so grievous and shameful, without fault? For the soldier bears more easily: what he sees his king bear. And so the noble King, the King of kings, and Lord of all, goes up to fight against the prince of the world: not protected by a shield, nor armed with steel; but by the cross defended and entrenched, to be fastened to the cross: on the cross finally to die for His friends. Coming therefore to the place of Calvary, with the standard of the cross, He chose there to set up the title of His name, and to work the mystery of our salvation; foreknowing that the spot given up to shame was to be made

glorious by wondrous signs: and the gallows of His cross to be changed into honour: in short time also to be preached throughout the world: and to be worshipped by the kings and princes of the earth. The venerable symbol of the cross is indeed a glorious ensign in the Christian host; and a singular protection above all manner of weapons: and an impregnable shield against the ferocity and terror of the devil. There then Jesus, the standard-bearer of the cross, prince and patron of all cross-bearers, stood in the place of awful shame: which, because of the bodies of the slain, was exceedingly despised and unclean. There He is speedily stripped of His garments; and naked He ascended the naked cross: and prayed for them that crucified Him. There the Almighty, as though He had no power, allowed Himself to be stretched out into the form of a cross: to be fastened by nails, to be pierced by a lance: and to be derided by wicked men. There deprived of all human comfort: He left an example of perfect self-denial, and a pattern of utter poverty. There by the touch of His sacred flesh, He consecrated the wood of life: and by the shedding of His precious blood dedicated the altar of the cross. There He fulfilled all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, figurative of His Passion: and offered Himself a victim to the Father in the odour of sweetness, for the salvation of the world. There He ended His life by a happy agony through obedience on the cross: dying, He conquered death, opened the gate of Paradise: and led the late repenting thief with Him to the promised joys.

Since therefore Jesus carried His cross on His own shoulders, Who was without sin; bear thou

also thy cross, for thou hast grievously and often sinned: and justly deserved eternal punishment. To weak minds the way of the cross seems bitter and burdensome: but its end is joyous and fruitful, and sweet and wholesome to them that love. Is it not better now to lead a sad and laborious life for Christ and to suffer with the Crucified; than after the brief pleasure of a corruptible life, to be tormented for ever with the devil in hell? For so much the more agreeable to God shalt thou be, and worthy of fuller glory in the heavenly kingdom; the more grievous pains and labours thou now bearest for the name of Jesus, not looking to temporal consolations: but to the Passion of Christ, and the hard life of the saints, who passed through many tribulations. Speedily, all temporal pain and injury inflicted, pass like a shadow; but the glory of everlasting recompense remains in Heaven: which in the end will be given as reward to thee for thy good patience, at the word of Christ. Strive therefore to keep the way of the holy cross; and to carry the sorrowful image of the crucified Jesus in thy heart: and manfully to imitate Him in thy frail body according to thy strength. Freely resign thyself, and trustfully commend all thy affairs to the will of God; Who did and endured for thy salvation so much, that thou wilt never be able to return Him worthy thanks for the least point of His Passion: even if thou couldst suffer all the trials and toils of all the holy martyrs. But, alas, that thou dost follow the Lord's cross so lukewarmly: that thou dost not compassionate the sorrows of Christ more intensely: that thou dost not serve Him more fervently, and render thanks unceasingly; Who deemed thee so dear, and so loved thee above

other creatures, as not to refuse to die for thee: but by His innocent death, delivered thee from death eternal. For thou wouldst have been condemned for ever: if Christ had not been crucified and had not died for thee. For who could have satisfied for all the sins of men; save Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb without stain?

XXIII

Of the merit of Our Lord's Passion, and the Dignity of the Holy Cross

BUT us it behoves to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection. Gal. 6, 14. These words concerning the sacred cross are read and chanted in holy Church; and therein is praised the merit of Our Lord's Passion, which is most deservedly placed before all the sacrifices of the Law, and all the toils and virtues of the saints. For in the Passion and cross of Christ is our true salvation, and the redemption of the whole human race is most fully found: whereby Christ redeemed us and satisfied unto God the Father for our sins: and conquering death, unlocked Paradise again for us. This is exemplified in the thief hanging on the cross: to whom it was said: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Luke, 23, 43. O wondrous clemency of God: O most sweet answer: O saving blessing of the cross: which absolved the thief from all guilt: and brought him into Paradise, the first among Christians. Let therefore all the faithful render thanks to Christ, signed with the sign of the holy cross; washed and cleansed in the blood

of Christ, redeemed by the Passion of Christ; quickened by the death of Christ, healed by the wounds of Christ: soothed by the pains of Christ, honoured by the shame of Christ. Let them one and all say with devout heart and harmonious mouth to the honour of the Crucified, to the confusion of the devil, to the exaltation of the holy cross: to the attaining of hope of eternal salvation, to the having of a strong trust in the hour of death; let them say, read, chant, recite, ponder, and ruminate the words most sweet, and truly most holy: and most agreeable to God above all perfumes. "But us it behoves to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Gal. 6, 14.

Happy the soul whose HEART IS PIERCED BY THE MOST BITTER PASSION OF CHRIST: and who DAILY EXERCISES HERSELF THEREIN, meditating, reading, praying. Blessed the soul, which takes up her cross, renouncing all earthly things: and whatever trouble befalls her WITHIN OR WITHOUT: bears it ALL PATIENTLY for Christ and HOLDS HER PEACE. For this is TO GLORY IN THE CROSS, TO REJOICE IN TRIBULATION FOR CHRIST'S SAKE; TO ABSTAIN FROM DELIGHTS OF THE FLESH, TO FLEE HONOURS, TO FORSAKE ONE'S OWN WILL: AND HUMBLY TO OBEY EVEN UNTO DEATH. To do this is to imitate Christ by the cross: and truly TO LOVE Him. For herein Christ knows who belongs to Him, and who loves Him more: if a man strives to conform himself to His Passion not only in thought, but in daily mortification.

And for this who is fit? Thinkest thou, any man will be found ready to take up his cross? A great and deep mystery is the word of the cross, which all do not receive: yea very many dread and flee the cross: and yet it leads to life

eternal. O truly blessed cross, what great sweetness thou hast within: and what great strength thou affordest against all malady of vice and grief of heart. O precious wood of life, comely, saving: and blessed above all the trees of Paradise; to be honoured by angels, worshipped by men: to be kissed with devout lips, and embraced with outstretched arms. Because of thee we have been delivered, and reconciled to God: who were by nature children of wrath, and lost slaves. Because of thee joy came into the world: sadness and lamenting into hell. Thou art the salvation of believers, the glory of apostles, the shield of martyrs; the praise of confessors, the crown of virgins, the solace of widows, the strength of the aged, the discipline of youth: the mirror of religious, the refuge of the distressed.

O cross, brighter than the stars, more beautiful than the moon, more resplendent than the sun; lighting up Heaven, penetrating hell, chasing the demons, defending men, terrifying the wicked, rejoicing the good: humbling the proud, raising the lowly. O glorious cross, wondrous sign: invincible standard, impregnable buckler. O sweet wood, worthy of all honour; thou didst bear the King of the heavens: and didst support in thine arms the dying Son of God. Because of thee all images of the cross of whatsoever material made, and in whatsoever place set: are held in honour and veneration. Before thee bow down kings and princes, lord and lady, slave and handmaiden, rich and poor, monk and cleric, master and pupil; every age, and each sex of the faithful worship thee, praise and bless: for Christ's sake, Who hung on thee, and redeemed all.

O cross blessed, for with thee are the sacra-

ments of the Church blessed; priests consecrated, the sick anointed, the dead defended; images sculptured, walls painted: altars decorated.

O most lovely cross, dedicated in the body of Christ, and adorned with His members as with jewels; reddened with rose-red blood, pierced by nails, fixed in the depths of the earth: thou stretchest thy points to the four quarters of the world, drawing all things to thee, and embracing all things that are in Heaven and upon earth.

O most noble cross, most strong above all kinds of armour; conquering the world and the devil, fearing no punishment of death: in every anguish and need, both in life and in death, thou art a most secure aid, and singular solace.

O most beloved cross, chosen by Christ: and on His shoulders borne to the place of Calvary, nor parted from Him until death: near which stood Mary, the Mother of Jesus, full of sorrow, with the beloved disciple John and the devout Magdalene: I beseech thee, help me and defend me ever here and everywhere, day and night; that the malignant enemy, the ensnarer of souls, prevail not against me: but by the sacred sign of thy power protect and strengthen me; that I may continue in a right faith, firm hope, and perfect charity: for His sake, Who died on thee for me.

O cross, most full of virtue, and most worthy of all honour: lo, before thee tremble the wicked powers of hell; under thy sway also empires bow: to thee the things of heaven and earth bend the knee. For in thy power are wrought signs and wonders in many regions; lightning and thunder yield to thee: in wars also and dark-some places, in perils of the sea and the air,

thou art an excellent defence, and most secure refuge.

O cross, most holy, most highly to be reverenced, worthily to be worshipped, intimately to be loved, to be written on the heart, impressed on the brow and breast, devoutly I pray, earnestly I beseech, be nigh to me in all my distress: save, deliver, bless, sanctify all my members: rule my senses, all my words and works as long as I am in this life: THAT BY THEE HE MAY ACCEPT ME, WHO BY THEE REDEEMED ME: Jesus Christ, my Lord, crucified for me.

O cross, saving tree, exalted above all trees; thou art higher than the cedar, more redolent than the cypress: lovelier than the palm, more precious than the balsam, richer than the olive, more fruitful than the vine, sweeter than the fig, more verdant than the box, redder than the rose; more wholesome than all herbs and simples: more efficacious than all medicines and salves. Thou healest bodies and souls: thou soothest pains, and comfortest tears: thou givest hope to the wretched: and promisest rewards to the just. Thou affordest pardon to the penitent: and bestowest grace and mercy on all them that flee to thee. Thou pourest abundant blessing on the devout: showest light to them that wander, givest compunction to hearts: and ceasest not to bring the oil of consolation to all the faithful throughout the world: and shalt not cease to bud the fruit of eternal life even to the end of time: by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for the salvation of the world.

O cross most sweet, most broad of foliage, most fresh of flower, most fertile of fruit: thou holdest the primacy and dignity, above all images

representing the sacred Passion of Christ: wherever the name of Christ be heard, or preached. Therefore, because of the veneration of the divine virtue concealed in thee: thou art rightly adored, worshipped, and honoured by all. Thou on churches and chapels, on cloisters and castles, on cities and towns, on gates and doors, on walls and windows, on towers and roofs, on pavements and tombs, on altars and panels, on chasubles and stoles, on copes and coverings, on bridles and banners, on books and documents, on tables and stools, on halls and cells, on divers buildings and paintings: thou dost impress and inscribe the symbol of thy power. Thou art also fittingly set with gold and silver, jewels and precious stones; thou art reverently embroidered and adorned with purple and fine linen, satin and silk, flowers and roses: because of the noble image of our Saviour, triumphant and hanging on thee. All these devout honours are rightly paid thee by the faithful: because thou didst endure great shame and derision from the perfidious Jews in the Passion of Christ. It is just therefore, O good and holy Cross, that thou shouldst be associated in honour and exaltation: who didst share the shame and grief. No mortal man, however, shall ever be able to offer thy worth sufficient praise and honour; even if he were resplendent with the virtues of all the angels: or were glorious with the miracles of the saints. All praise and honour is too little and falls far short in words of what thy worth demands: for from the benefits of Christ abundantly bestowed on us, and from thy constant cleaving to Christ in the hour of death, still fuller homage of praise is justly due to thee. In this especially is fidelity of friendship known:

when a man stands by his friend in his last need, and compassionates, and ministers, and continues his close comrade even to the yielding up of the ghost. Thus certainly didst thou act, O most faithful Cross, with the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ: Who first patiently bore thee on His shoulders: and thou in turn didst worthily receive thy Creator in thine arms. But also thou didst not forsake Him, thy lover, even to the end: by Whom thou was gently embraced, and long carried. Whence likewise thou hast become to all true Christians and Crossbearers a mirror of endurance in the chastisement of the flesh: yea also, lovers of the cross praise thee as the victor of every toil, and the giver of eternal rewards; as is most clearly shown in blessed Peter the Apostle, and St. Andrew: who both went to Christ by means of the cross.

O cross, most happy, and to be loved above all devout comforts: ever to be held in mind, ever to be kept in sight: thou art the couch of the Saint of saints: Who, when He had not where to lay His aching and ailing head: thou didst become His pillow. Thou art the bed of the wounded back of Our Saviour, not soft or flower-strewn: but unyielding, rough, and narrow exceedingly. Thou hast suffered none to tarry, or rest, or repose within thine arms: but the sacred, divine body of Jesus, virgin-born: by which in divers places thou didst deserve to be touched, sprinkled and consecrated with His precious blood. Thou art the stool of the holy feet of the Son of God in His agony: thou the altar of the High Priest: on which Christ offered Himself for our sins, a victim to God unto the odour of sweetness. Thou art the ark of the covenant of

the Lord, containing the Author of both Testaments: thou, the golden vase holding the hidden manna, the true body of Christ, sacrificed for us. Thou art the treasury of the most high King, full of heavenly riches; in which are contained the holiest relics of all the world: namely, the Lord's body, the bloody nails, the thorny crown, and all the precious wounds.

O truly holy cross: how grandly hast thou merited to be beautified, enriched, and honoured by God. For thou art adorned with such great, good, and holy relics: that no shrine, no casket, no royal palace, no house of ivory, no marble pillar is to be compared with thy worth. Duly then and justly let the whole earth with all devotion worship thee and sing to thee: let it utter a psalm to thy name for ever and ever to the honour of the Crucified. Let every faithful soul therefore read and often meditate the words written of the sacred cross: and say, with blessed
Gal. 6, 14. Paul, the Apostle, and all the holy Church, "But us it behoves to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is our salvation, life and resurrection." Amen.

XXIV

Of the Manifold Fruit from Remembrance of the Lord's Passion, and of Thankfulness therefor.

Heb. 12, 3. *THINK diligently upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself: that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds.* The Passion of Christ, brought back to memory,

bestows many benefits on a man: and the more often and earnestly it is pondered: the more sweetly it savours, and the more deeply it moves. FOR IT IS AN INCENTIVE TO DIVINE LOVE: it is the teaching of patience: it is comfort in tribulation. It is the foe of dissipation: it is the subject of holy compunction: it is the exercise of interior devotion. It is the banishing of despair: it is the most certain hope of the pardon of sins: it is the profitable redemption of past evil days. It is a source of surpassing confidence in the hour of death, that a man despair not of himself: it is the appeasing of the severity of God in the judgement to come. It is the soothing of anxious trouble: it is the endurance of harsh reproach. It is the expulsion of evil thought: it is the restraint of temptation of the flesh. It is instruction in humble submission: it is ease in bodily sickness. It is the belying of worldly honour: it is the reproach of temporal abundance. It is the counsel of voluntary poverty: it is the renunciation of self-will: it is the cutting-off of superfluous want. It is the arousing of lukewarm life: it is the inflaming of fervent amendment. It is the gaining of fuller grace: it is the bringing of heavenly consolation: it is the proof of fraternal compassion. It is the preparation of divine contemplation: it is the increase of future blessedness. It is the easing of present pain: it is the purging of future fire: it is great satisfaction for daily sins. With these and very many other goods abounds and flourishes the Passion of Christ devoutly pondered; often read, carefully digested. This is very well known and savoured of the soul given to God, a stranger to the world, a friend of solitude: a warden of her own mouth,

humble of heart, and at rest from cares. This holy remembrance is highly pleasing to God: it rejoices the angels, edifies men: purifies the conscience, drives away weariness, soothes pains, sweetens bitternesses: represses anger, curbs concupiscence. Truly the Passion of Christ is the hidden treasure of God, the fullness of every virtue, the perfection of the religious state; the summary of all holiness.

But, alas, how great is the ingratitude of man, how great the sloth of the human heart: how great its carelessness in remembering the benefits of God: which are such, so boundless and precious: that they cannot be computed, nor fully unfolded by any man. Return then to thy heart, O servant of Christ: and leaving aside vain and perishable things, recall the benefits of God, and chiefly meditate often and earnestly on the Passion of Christ: so that thereby THOU MAYEST BE MORE FERVENTLY INFLAMED UNTO HIS LOVE. Then thou shalt be acceptable to God, and in thy own heart very joyous and peaceful; if thou art mindful of the benefits of God, and devoutly render thanks to Him; from Whom thou hast received every good. THEN DOST THOU PROFITABLY SPEND THY TIME, WHEN THOU GRIEVEST FOR THY EVIL DEEDS: AND GIVEST THANKS FOR THE FAVOURS OF GOD. But for this thou shouldst grieve much, that never hast thou offered worthy thanks to God for His so immense blessings; nor yet art able to thank Him sufficiently: even if thou shouldst attend to nothing else. Thou shouldst, however, strive to raise thy heart to God: and, as much as thou canst, ponder God's gifts with great attention. O how much He loved thee, Who hast shown such wonders in the beauty of

creation: that thou mightest have ready matter in the sensible creatures of the world of constant thankfulness to God, Who created thee and those good things. Wherefore strive TO SERVE HIM WITH SOVEREIGN REVERENCE IN JOY OF HEART, as the holy angels in Heaven: as far as is possible in the frail body and in the state of the present life: which, compared with the blessedness to come, is rather to be called a prison of the soul. For God deigned to be made man, to suffer, be crucified, and die for this purpose; that by His Passion, cross and death, He might show thee, how much He loved thee: for whom He toiled and endured so much. Be not then ungrateful, nor unmindful of all those things, which the Lord Jesus did on earth: but carefully consider the mighty works of God, liberally wrought in favour of the whole human race. Who yet has promised much greater goods, and most certainly will bestow them in Heaven on thee: if only thou art grateful for present gifts, and remainest faithful in little even until death.

A great vice is ingratitude, and exceedingly blamable before God and man. For he is unworthy of a divine favour: who does not give thanks to God with a devout heart. Nor does he deserve to receive more, who praises himself in anything; or works carelessly, were it only one talent granted to him. It is certainly a great thing: that God should deign to give man anything. NOR SHOULD IT BE DEEMED LITTLE, WHICH THE LORD, SO GREAT AND HIGH ABOVE ALL, BESTOWS ON A MAN POOR AND A SINNER: who has nothing worthy to render in return. Let God then be loved much; let His praise be ever in thy mouth: and let a small thing be taken for

great. Let all be rendered back to Him; let all be attributed to Him: Who certainly has given all, and has favoured one unworthy. Nor does God seek aught, save to be purely loved, and duly praised for all; so that by loving, praising, honouring, and returning thanks to Him above all: man may be for ever beatified in Him. Amen.

XXV

Of Profitable Exercise in the Passion of Christ

Cant. 7. 10. The voice of the soul.

TO my beloved: and His turning is towards me. Between friends mutual discourse gives delight, and private counsel is held dear: such as also often takes place between the devout soul and Jesus crucified. She therefore says: "I to my Beloved am what I am: and beside Him I heed no other. On Him alone I long to gaze: to Him wholly I commend myself; for He has care of me: and His turning doubtless is towards me. I will not then that my eyes be turned aside elsewhere; but that my whole heart be turned unto my Beloved: Who suffered and died for me: yea, through love was wholly torn and pierced with wounds. Formerly, I sought Him an infant wailing in the crib: but now I desire to behold Him hanging on the gibbet. For as then I turned me to worship the new-born child: so now also I turn me to Him to mourn Him, delivered to death for me. In all these my Beloved is to me, Who was given wholly to me: for me was truly born, for me truly afflicted and sacrificed. Once He shed tears of pity: but now He gives His precious

blood. Lo, how He loved me: Who delivered Himself to death, to deliver me from death. Should I not justly turn myself to seek, hold and embrace this Beloved to the neglect of all else; Whose unspeakable love unceasingly looks to me? But His turning is towards me in a special manner: when He arouses me with the interior goads of love to renew the memory of His Passion, and demands that I thank Him, and be conformed to Him within: for in nothing did He toil so much for me. There He unveils to me the mystery of redemption: and more fully instructs me to savour of the things of God. For this wisdom, which comes from above, is beyond man: teaching and urging not to glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is my whole salvation and redemption. By Whom also the world is crucified to me and I to the world; that I may delight to say to Him with confidence: 'I to my Beloved and His turning is towards me.' Much sweetness seems to me hidden in this word; and if I do not take all: still I do not give up hope of receiving some, if only a very little. Let but the Beloved be turned towards me, and say whatever He please: I know, that He will not speak in vain.

Gal. 6. 14.

Gal. 6. 14.

Cant. 7, 10.

"Tell me, beloved Jesus, the word of Thy mystery: the word of Thy Passion and cross, which Thou hast openly borne in the flesh. For all do not take the word of the cross; which to some indeed seems a scandal, and to others is foolishness: but to me is the power and wisdom of God, the salvation also of the world and life eternal. If any man think otherwise, he is an infidel and foolish: and the judgement of God will go against him."

The voice of the soul.

The voice of Christ.

"My Passion," saith the beloved, "is as some precious aromatic herb of most excellent perfume and sweetest taste; which carefully pondered in the heart, as if well crushed in a mortar, diffuses a most powerful odour: healing every disease and sickness of vice. Herein truly thou shalt find the medicine of the soul; and full comfort of every grief. But it behoves that thou OFT exercise thyself THEREIN: and WITH ALL THY HEART STRIVE TO CONFORM THYSELF THERETO. For then thou shalt begin to live religiously, and shalt truly progress in virtue, and die in peace: if in life and death thou dost imitate Me by the Passion and cross. But, alack, I am an abject in My own house: and one cast aside. For I seem truly a stranger and shut out from the hearts of many, for whom My life has no savour; whom My Passion does not touch, or attract, or reach their heart as it should: but, they are entangled in things vain and superfluous. They anxiously consider their own daily misery and want; and study to avoid temporal evils: yet how much I suffered for them, they think but seldom or little. Wretched they are and pitiable, full of cares and complaints: who can suffer little for Me; but are eager to do much for their own will: yea even, for the fulfilment of their own desire, are sensible almost of no toil. Alas, such do not draw saving fruit from My Passion; but because of their excessive softness which they bear towards themselves: they risk great harm to their soul. For if they would be perfectly cured, and freed from passions: with all humility they should take refuge in the true remedies of the soul concealed in My Passion; and by the merit and power of My Passion they would become more strong: and

would learn to bear all adversities with patience. My Passion hath no taste, save for them that long and seriously meditate it: and fervently desire to imitate the same. It is the tree of life to them that grasp it: and who follows it well, he shall be blessed in his deed. For he shall gain in the present greater grace: and in the time to come fuller glory.

"Collect therefore thy senses, and abide with thyself: shutting out all tumult. Then take up a little portion of My Passion, and diligently think it over according to the time and season. For this, brought back to memory each day: will more and more savour, strengthen and inflame him that meditates. For all spiritual progress and perfection will be found therein: but these good things are not tasted, save by them that love and desire to imitate it. To the carnal and worldly it seems bitter and hard: but to the pious and devout sweet and comforting. For who aim at honours, or at gaining earthly possessions, everywhere seeking their own interests; these are not in agreement with My Passion: nor can they attain its internal sweetness. But who seeks to despise the world, and to crucify his flesh with its vices and concupiscences: he discovers the greatest consolation: and he shall experience singular devotion in My Passion. For to such a soul I speak: 'My dove in the clefts of the rock: in the hollow places of the wall.' To her also I frequently address those words: which I said to a certain beloved disciple: 'Bring thy hand hither, and see the place of My nails; and be not cowardly and fearful: but strong and great-souled in imitating My sufferings.' He also shall have his singular refuge in the open wound of My right

The voice of Christ.

Cant. 2. 14.

John, 20. 27.

side: whosoever strives to deny himself: and to strip himself of all affection for creatures. He shall also become the more free to visit Me in the deep wound of love: the less now he troubles himself of any created comfort. For I draw all his interior to Myself: so that he feels not himself, who feels My wounded heart. Make thyself then a stranger to every earthly occupation: put aside empty anxieties, retire from friends and acquaintance; keep thyself pure and free from all things: that thou mayest enter to thy Beloved through the door of the wounded side. Steep thyself in affection such as the holy women had, who looked upon Me hanging on the cross: and most bitterly mourned Me as their only-begotten child. For then shalt thou truly be able to realize and taste how powerful My Passion is in the heart of the lover, if thou puttest on the bowels of My beloved mother: if thou resolvest with thy whole heart that there is nothing to be loved as I: because from greatness of love, is drawn greatness of compassion."

The voice of the soul.

"Well and very well Thy words please me, Lord Jesus Christ. Whence I beg Thee, that although I be not able perfectly to imitate Thee in all things: Thou grant me at least a little to compassionate Thee. I will uplift therefore the eyes of my heart to my Lord hanging naked on the cross; I will attentively consider each wound and piercing of Thy body: and with special devotion I will embrace and kiss the wounded hands and the transpierced feet with their nails. Then also I will enter into the open wound of Thy side, as into the chamber of my Beloved sleeping; where I will live in secret, and shall be guarded from all harm: and will rest with happy repose.

I will not fear whatever evils are inflicted upon me; nor whatever things can be said or felt in contempt of me, if only Thou art with me and abidest with me. I will put all trust in Thee: and in Thy side day and night will I tarry. Thou art a more faithful friend than all this world: Thou art a wall stronger for defence, than all the host of the angels. And therefore never should I be forgetful of Thee: but as much as my faculty and frailty permit: sorrowing I will be mindful of Thy most bitter Passion. Of which nevertheless no creature is fully and fitly able to think, speak or write enough, even if all should give their time to nothing else; for it is beyond all the comprehension of a creature, that Thou, God, the Creator of all, didst deign to become man and to die for men.

"I therefore suppliantly pray Thee, Lord, mercifully to look upon me a sinner; and by Thy grace inwardly to enlighten, frequently to visit: to water with tears, to crush and cleanse with compunction; so that whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood: Thou mayest renew and enkindle by the earnest meditation of Thy Passion. Grant me devoutly to progress therein: and ever to gather thence wholesome remedies for all my passions. Would that it more and more deeply touched my heart than it has hitherto: and affected and instructed me in such manner, as it has often enkindled and touched many holy men and women; so that in my life also the likeness of Thy death might result by the working of the spirit and the mortification of the flesh: and that I might be able to say that memorable word of the Apostle, 'With Christ I am nailed to the cross.' And to proclaim also Gal. 2. 10.

that most loving word against all the carnal and
Gal. 6. 17. vain-speaking wiseacres of the world: 'From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me: for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.' The blessed Apostle Paul bore Thy glorious and precious scars in his body: when, besides the daily memory of Thy Passion, with all the affection of his heart, he rejoiced to be afflicted externally, and to be esteemed of no account for Thy name; and whatever he felt grievous in the body, or troublesome in the soul: all this he deemed light and easily bearable from the loving contemplation of Thy wounds. And therefore he
2 Cor. 4. 10. exhorted all Thy faithful lovers saying: 'Let us always bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus: that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.' Strive thou also, my soul, now to do this same, especially these days, wherein the venerable memory of the Passion of the Lord is celebrated in the Church; and with mournful mind and devout attention direct thither the eye of contemplation: where thou knowest Jesus suffered for thee in more grievous pains. Say lovingly with the spouse, mindful ever of thy
Cant. 7. 10. Spouse crucified from love: 'I to my Beloved: and His turning is towards me.'"

XXVI

Of Seven Notable Points of Meditation on the Passion of Christ

ATTEND *and see: if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow.* Above all the benefits of God bestowed on the human race, the Passion of Christ stands supreme: and touches the heart most tenderly. Therefore ought the mind be watchful to remember so great a benefit; and with great compassion of heart earnestly ponder on the bitterness of Christ's Passion: for this is grateful to God, and wholesome for him that meditates. For each several wound is a medicine of the soul; and the pitiless blows of the scourge are proofs of God's love: and the wiping out of our sins. O what great thanks am I bound to render Christ for every blow and cruel wound: which He endured in His body for me, a vile sinner. Lament. 1. 12.

Ponder, therefore, first, Who is He that suffers these things; secondly, from whom He suffers: thirdly, how much He suffers; fourthly, for whom He suffers: fifthly, how long He suffers; sixthly, in what places He suffers: seventhly, in what members He suffers. For it helps much to interior compassion: if these seven notable points are considered in order. For if thou heedest the person of the Sufferer; none is more worthy, none more noble: none more holy, none more excellent. Verily, He is the Son of God Who suffers: the only-begotten of God the Father, the First-born of the Virgin-Mother, conceived of the Holy Ghost, full of holiness and grace; renowned for signs and virtues: living in the world without

sin. He is the true Lamb of God without stain, prefigured in the Law: foretold by the prophets, desired by many kings and just men; sent into the world by the Father to suffer for the salvation of the world, ready of His own accord for the cross and death: sacrificed to God the Father on the altar of the cross for our sins. He therefore, being such and so great, a true priest and supreme Pontiff, holy, innocent, stainless, King of kings, Lord, Creator of all things, Maker of the angels, Saviour of men, refused not to be despised by men, made captive, bound, scourged, crucified, slain, buried: as the text of His sacred Passion clearly teaches.

O woful sight to every one that passes by the way of this life, manifested without: and given as example to all the faithful to be imitated within. Prithee, diligently weigh every single word and blow narrated in the Passion: since they were all wrought for thy salvation. For they commend to thee the very great charity of Christ: and they show thee that patience is to be exercised in every tribulation. It is most certainly evident that in comparison with the griefs and reproaches of Christ: the troubles, which thou dost suffer, are of no account. It is good for thee therefore to fix thy eye here often; and to seek solace in the sorrowful Passion of Christ: and as a dove to dwell in the clefts of the rock and mourn for the sufferings of Jesus. For Jesus will comfort thee more in the meditation of His blessed Passion: than all this world in all its honours and riches. In the Passion of Christ thou shalt find what will edify thee, and purify the conscience; but brief is the pleasure in worldly delights: and the conscience is left defiled. For everything that

is not of God is vanity: and is to be esteemed as nothing. But the Passion of Christ is a living word and an efficacious lesson to instruct and inflame and purify: and more keen than any sword it reaches even to the interior of the heart. For it reproves negligence, softens hardness; pierces the heart of the lover with compassion: and very often moves to tears. For so often is the devout soul touched with compunction, and in a certain manner wounded within; as often as the Passion of Christ is read, or preached: or when a cross is gazed upon, or Jesus Christ and He crucified is named. And this for the soul is a great consolation, if thinking of the Passion of Christ she feels His pain in the spirit: which Christ endured and felt in manifold ways in the body.

Of the first point, Who is He that suffers.

Now therefore take heed and gaze upon Christ, as it were present: Who suffers these things for thee. First, think on the dignity of the person: and grieve vehemently that God in the flesh is so contumeliously handled. Behold the highest above all is put down lower than all; the noblest is dishonoured, the loveliest is disfigured with spittle: the wisest is mocked, the mightiest is bound; the most innocent is scourged, the holiest is crowned with thorns: the most meek is buffeted, the richest is made poor; the most generous is despoiled, the most chaste is stripped naked: the most worthy is blasphemed, the most excellent is reproached; the most learned is held a fool, the most loving is hated: the most truthful is contradicted, the most sweet is given to drink of gall; the blessed is cursed, the peaceful is baited: the just is accused, the guiltless is condemned; the physician is wounded, the Son of

God is crucified: the immortal is slain, the Master is hanged for the slave. O unheard-of crime: O awful and accursed wickedness of the Jews; which God, by His most loving mercy and sufferance, changed into so great a good: to wit, into the salvation of believers. For whence for a time the light of the world is quenched: thence light eternal is relit in the minds of the faithful. And whence for a brief season life is dead: thence everlasting death is slain in the elect. Finally, from the Passion of Christ the devil is overcome, and shamed; hell is despoiled, the thief converted, the world redeemed: the souls of the just are delivered from Limbo; the gates of Heaven are opened, the losses of the angels repaired: eternal salvation, wrought by Christ, is proclaimed to the whole world.

Of the second point, from whom Christ suffers.

Consider, secondly, from whom Christ suffers these wrongs. Assuredly from His own people, from His own race dear to Him; from His kindred according to the flesh: from the Israelites, children of Abraham, whom of old He enriched with so many blessings; ennobled with so many privileges: instructed beyond the other nations with precepts and laws and ceremonies; from men whom He Himself founded, to whom He gave the best portion of the earth: for whose sake He came into the world and whom He desired to save. By these then, so gloriously favoured and exalted, Christ is wickedly spurned; enviously accused, ill-treated without cause, and finally condemned to a most disgraceful death. They were not mindful of the multitude of His mercies, which are from the ages: nor of His wondrous works, which He showed them, even after they had offended in many things. They

heeded not how humbly He lived in their midst; how wholesomely He taught them: how He loved poverty and despised wealth; how He fled honours, and chose the lowly and simple: how many sick He healed, to how many blind He gave sight, how many demons He expelled, how many lepers He cleansed; and how resplendent with many other glorious signs, by His works He proved Himself God: and, undergoing the needs of our body, showed Himself to be a true man. For these good things and wonderful virtues, wrought by the divine power, certainly He deserved, not insult, but glory; not punishment, but gratitude, not hatred, but love: He should have received from all, not mockery, but rather honour. But, alack, they were perverse and unbelieving, thankless for all favours: and for many good things they returned many evil; and also they incited numerous others to the same crime for the increase of their malice: with threats and shouts they demanded the death of the innocent. For by the persuasion of the princes, and the agitation of the priests, the people are moved: all are turned against Christ; old men with youths clamour, with awful cries: "Away with Him, away with Him, let Him be crucified." All previous praise and honour is changed into lament: all the applause and singing of the Hebrew children, into the howling of raging wolves. No age was wanting, neither sex was silent; no state of life was unrepresented, all the evil-minded Jews and Gentiles agree and consent, to deliver Jesus speedily to death: and hang the blameless life upon the cross. Wherefore all these are guilty of eternal damnation in the death of Christ; verily are they malignant murderers and ex-

John, 19. 15.

cessively cruel deicides, who spared in naught the Son of God: but wrought on Him all the injuries which they were able. For they fabricated falsehoods: and perverted things done well and nobly. O wondrous clemency of God; O inestimable patience of Christ; which could not be moved by such wrongs, nor exhausted by sufferings. For herein He gave to all that suffer wrongs a most excellent and strong encouragement; that they bear at least a few passing words: who cannot yet endure hard blows.

Of the third point, how much Christ suffers.

Thirdly, thou shouldst meditate how much Christ suffers: and by how many, numerous evils are inflicted upon Him. It is evidently clear from the gospel witness, that first He was sold for a little money by His own disciple; afterwards, by a kiss of feigned peace betrayed to the enemy: grievously reproached by the priests; called a blasphemer by the Pontiff: defamed by the Scribes and Pharisees; accused by the elders of the city: brought before the judge by the servants; by Herod despised and mocked: by Pilate condemned to death; taken and bound by the armed men: scourged and crowned by the soldiers; insulted, spat upon and cuffed by the retainers: detested by the maid-servants; so that they said to Peter, "Of a truth thou art one of them: thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean." Scarcely was there found one so poor and base: as not to rejoice in the sufferings of Jesus. O sorrow upon sorrow; O poor and humble Jesus: having no comforter or helper from among the sons of men. Thy acquaintance withdrew; Thy friends stood afar off: they could weep, aid they were not able. Amid most wicked enemies Jesus was forsaken; from the greatest even to the least He was hounded to

Luke, 22. 58, 59. Matth. 26. 29.

death: with shame and shouting He was led outside the city, laden with the wood of the cross; stripped of His garments, hanged naked between thieves: fastened with nails, given to drink of vinegar and gall. Grievous were the wicked words; more grievous, the cruel blows: most grievous, the dreadful sufferings of the cross. On His most tender, most holy, most stainless, most comely virgin body they wrought such disgraceful tortures: that from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there was no soundness of body: but He seemed as a leper to all that beheld. See then now and ponder whether there is a sorrow like to His sorrow: which thy God endures for thee. Number, if thou canst, all the blows, all the wounds, all the stripes, all the reproaches, all the ignominies inflicted on Him by many: and with pitiful heart compassionate Him, suffering all this with patience. Write it on the tablet of thy heart, as a constant memorial: and in thy every trouble turn the eye of thy mind to Jesus hanging on the cross. For this crucifixion was to Christ, after so many sufferings inflicted upon Him, most disgraceful, most bitter, and most grievous. For it was most sad for Him on the part of His friends standing afar off, and weeping copiously: for their grief and groaning He deemed His own sorrow. It was also most cruel on the part of His enemies deriding Him, insulting, and rejoicing over His death: who were touched by no pity for such pains and sufferings. Lo, now thou hast heard how much and from how many Christ suffered: whom every Christian should justly compassionate. If a man were to see his father, or some very dear friend tortured before him with such torments, and hanged on

the public gallows outside the gate; would he not at once, as if driven mad, wither away and faint for sorrow? Much more then should the Passion of Christ pierce thy inmost bowels: and provoke thee to wholesome mourning. Strive therefore to cast from thee all carnal love; to shut out all vain joy: that thereby thou mayest merit to be numbered among the devout lovers of Christ; who daily exercise themselves in the Lord's Passion, and so bring all the sufferings of Christ home to themselves: as to think little or nothing of their own wounds and wrongs. Of whom blessed Paul the apostle, the lover of the Lord's Passion, saith: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross."

Phil. 2. 5, 7, 8.

Of the fourth point, for whom Christ suffers.

Fourthly, thou shalt weigh for whom Christ suffered: and for what reason God endured so bitter a death. Doubtless for our sins, which we contracted from our first parents; which also we have each committed by our own wickedness: in in every age or condition, or order, or office whatsoever. "For all have sinned and do need the glory of God," saith the Apostle; whether Jews or gentiles, whether slaves or freedmen: whether poor or rich, whether kings or princes; whether clerics or laymen, whether priests or teachers, whether prelates or subjects: all the sons of Adam, I say, we are all born children of wrath by nature; but by the grace of Christ we are delivered, by the baptism of Christ cleansed: by the death of Christ saved from death everlasting. Whether then it be called the Passion of Christ, or the blood of Christ, or the cross of Christ, or the death of Christ, it is the same; and all this

Rom. 3. 23.

profits us unto salvation: for by believing in Christ, and loving Christ, we are incorporated and united with Christ. For the head suffered for the members, the head ached for the members: the head on the cross prayed for the members and gained forgiveness. Therefore for all Christ died; so that, undergoing temporal death, He might overcome eternal death, and of sin destroy sin: that is, that by the suffering of His Passion He might pay all the debts of our sins. Hence also blessed Peter, commending the grace of Christ and the merit of His Passion, saith, "Christ died once for our sins, the just for the unjust; that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh: but enlivened in the spirit." Hence also it is read in the Apocalypse that the souls of the saints with great thanksgiving fell down before the throne of God: aud before the Lamb sang praises for their redemption, saying, "Thou hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation: and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests." Hence also it is that holy mother Church in the Litany of the Saints when she prays for divers needs and perils: directs especially this petition to Christ: "By Thy Passion and cross, by Thy death and burial: deliver us, O Lord." For such a prayer is exceedingly pleasing to God: and bestows greater confidence of obtaining forgiveness: because of the merit of the Passion of Christ. Indeed the Passion of Christ is the treasure of the Church, which cannot be exhausted or consumed: but is of infinite power and worth. For hereby every debt is paid: every sin is forgiven; and to the penitent the kingdom of Heaven is promised and given: which for

1 Pet 3. 18.

Apoc. 5. 9, 10.

many thousands of years was held fast closed. O most sweet reconciliation unto appeasing the face of God: O most worthy sacrifice unto recovering lost grace; O most full satisfaction unto washing away every stain of the sins of the sons of Adam: in whom all sinned and fell. Since then Christ found no man free from sin: therefore He came to deliver all; by love He satisfied for all: by His compassion He willed; by His divinity He was able: by His humanity He accomplished the work of redemption. Whence blessed Paul said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; for Christ we beseech you: be reconciled to God." Lo, thou knowest and hast heard for whom Christ suffered, and for what reason He condescended to undergo this death: namely, for all men, of every age and sex, born of the stock of Adam.

2 Cor. 5. 19, 20.

Of the fifth point, how long a time Christ suffers.

Fifthly, thou shalt ponder how long a time Christ suffered, and how long He was in pain; for this is a part of the endurance of His patience: and brings great encouragement to the cowardly and sad. Take heed and read diligently all the books of the holy Gospel: and thou shalt plainly find that the whole life of Christ, from the beginning of His birth to the giving up of the ghost, was spent in great poverty, in persecution and temptation, in toil and weariness, in the contempt and insults of wicked men; and, finally, consummated in the death of the cross: and thus no period passed without tribulation, as long as He lived in the world. But, considering the particular day and hour of His Passion, then from the evening of the most holy supper, the sadness of the threatening sorrow and coming death commenced; when, while His disciples still supped, He foretold them that the same night He should

be betrayed by one of them into the hands of sinners: and it continued until after the hour of His burial: yea, even to the third day on which He rose from the dead: for then He appeared to His disciples living, joyous and glorious. Grievous therefore was the sin of man, which could barely be expiated by so long a time and such great pains: for which also it was necessary that the Son of God should be crucified and die. Whence, since human weakness is exceedingly great, and prone to evil from its youth: moreover it also happens that men sin through many occasions and temptations at divers seasons and times both day and night, often even knowingly, often in ignorance: so that scarce any day or hour pass without sin and offence against God; therefore, lest man should despair of obtaining pardon because of the frequency of his crimes: Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, suffered for us all the most grievous torments, a long time and at different hours: for a whole night and day He bore suffering for the sins of the sons of men: very often shedding His precious blood. Then also verily at those periods He observed the seven canonical Hours to the praise of His Father: not chanting, but suffering and praying for us. Wherefore all religious, instructed by the example of Christ, ought daily offer these seven Hours to God; because Christ presented Himself a holocaust to God in the odour of sweetness on the altar of the cross: and as a chosen ram, caught among the briars of sin, was sacrified for Isaac, that is, for all the elect. Whereof blessed Peter writing to the faithful of Christ, exhorts them to thankfulness, saying, "For you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver, from your vain con- 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

versation of the tradition of your fathers: but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a Lamb unspotted." Our Redeemer, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, willed to endure in His most holy body so long a time so many pains: to take away the handwriting of our condemnation; to arouse us to the fervour of severe penance: to give an example of great patience all the days of our life. And in sooth patience is to us all supremely necessary, as long as we live in this miserable life, full of trials; for no man is safe, not even one day or hour, from the snares of the devil and the ruin of sin, in whatsoever place, or order, or office, he may be constituted: unless every hour he be watched and guarded from above by the grace and mercy of God. But amid these evils and perils we must have recourse chiefly to the Lord's Passion, and hide and rest under the tree of the cross, as under the shadow of the divine protection: and deeply and often meditate on the patience of Christ; for it has a most savoury power to sweeten and soften all the bitterness of our sufferings: and to lighten burdens, by whatever man, or spirit one may be troubled.

Of the praise of patience.

Study therefore, after the example of Christ and His saints, to bear with even mind all the adversities of this life: and to hold on to patience as thy armour. Complain not of the length of the time, nor of the bitterness of the affliction; but think that Christ suffered longer more grievous things for thee: and therefore it is just thou shouldst follow the same way. For in suffering for Christ thou shalt merit much: and thou shalt reap thence many good things. First, indeed, thou dost honour God more highly: if thou takest

with good will every contradiction from His hand. Thou dost rejoice the angels: who are glad in Heaven over thy endurance. Thou dost edify the neighbour: if thou bearest wrongs in silence. Thou dost confound the devil: if thou givest thanks, when wronged and despised. Thou dost double thy crown: for here thou shalt receive greater grace, and hereafter higher glory. Every present toil indeed is little, and this life is short: but the reward to come is great and the repose infinite. In effect, thou shalt become a martyr of God as often: as thou dost suffer pain willingly for God. Think not therefore that God is against thee: if in this world thou art troubled and down-trodden. Rejoice rather that here thou art humbled and scourged: so that hereafter with Christ thou mayest be glorified for ever. For oft prosperity is more harmful than adversity: and flattery more speedily deceives than bitter blame. Faint not therefore in thy affliction for the name and love of Christ: but constantly with patient soul endure all, as did Christ and all the saints: who, undergoing pain, conquered the enemy. For by suffering adversity a man becomes holier; brighter than gold, more transparent than glass: more free from vice, more perfect in virtue; more acceptable to Christ, more like the saints: stronger against his enemies, more lovable to his friends. Each man also becomes more watchful in self-custody, more ready to compassionate; more deeply humble, more prudently discreet: more fervent for prayer, more prepared for Heaven more secure from hell. These are the good fruits of holy patience; which are especially evident in the most bitter Passion of Christ: and this is proposed as an example to us all. For this most

sacred Passion was in pain the most bitter of all the sufferings of the saints: in humility, the most profound, in charity, the most excellent: in obedience, the most perfect, in patience, the strongest; in purity, the most blameless, in profit, the most wholesome: in merits, the most worthy, in remedies, the most efficacious; in satisfaction for all, the most satisfying, in atonement, the most appeasing: in reconciliation, the most acceptable: in sacrifice, the most grateful; in redemption, the most fruitful, in mysteries, the most abundant: in sweetness of all virtues, the most fragrant, preferable to all sciences, arts and medicines. So great, so high, so long, so deep, so sweet, so devout, so compunctious, so loving, so fervent, so comforting, so savoury, so virtuous is the Passion of Our Redeemer: that by no human words can it be fully praised; by no tongues of angels can it be worthily unfolded: but it is ever new and fresh; always it invigorates and strengthens, instructs, and enkindles: but chiefly those who, despising all things, seek their solace in the wounds of Christ Jesus.

Of the sixth point, in what places Christ suffers.

Sixthly, thou shalt note all those places in which Christ suffered any insults or pains for thee. On Mount Olivet indeed He prayed thrice; there for sadness and fear He sweated blood: and in the prayer He made, He perfectly resigned Himself to the will of His Father. In the garden He was sought and found by the Jews: He did not flee from them, but went to meet them; by Judas He was betrayed, and kissed with a false mouth: by the armed servants taken and bound: by the vile band, as a wicked thief, He was violently dragged and brought to the city in the dark night with torches and lanterns: and

He is most carefully guarded, lest He should escape or be snatched away by any one. In the house of Annas He is first examined, and He is questioned concerning His teaching and His disciples; and when He had given a good answer to this: He was severely buffeted on the cheek by one of the retainers. In the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, where many were gathered together against Him, He is subjected to numerous wrongs and mockeries; His face is veiled, defiled with spittle, struck with blows: and He is declared as worthy of death. And, when it was dawn, He is publicly led with hands bound, through the streets to the judgement hall of Pilate: and grievously charged as a breaker of the law and a seducer of the people. Thence He is sent over to the court of Herod: by whom derided and clothed in a white garment, He is treated as a fool, and sent back to Pilate; mocked on all sides, reproached on all sides: nowhere safe, nowhere at rest; hated by all, made hateful to all: without He hears clamours, within He suffers griefs; and after receiving cruel blows and many wounds, as if unworthy of this life, He is led out of the city with the shameful cross: and hanged naked between thieves on the place of Calvary. And, when all things had been consummated that were written concerning Him, in the bosom of the earth, to wit, in a tomb newly sculptured, He is reverently buried by the just men, Joseph and Nicodemus, and wept over by the holy women with many sighs and tears. Behold how many places Christ visited in His Passion, how often therein He shed His precious blood; how many insults He endured with blows, that He might sanctify His people, and cleanse the contaminated places: in which

men often sin and offend God. Who could number, alack, all the evils which are still done publicly and privately in many places; both in houses and in squares, in gardens, in towns, in mountains and valleys, in fields and woods, in halls and earthly palaces? Christ is not there; there is not heard weeping over the Saviour's Passion: but vanity of vanities, jest and laughter in the banquets of Herod, with his princes. Wo to them that have thus separated themselves from Him, Who redeemed them; having their face towards the world: and turning their back upon God. However, the compassionate Lord ceases not to cry after such: and to call His wandering sheep to repentance. For He left men a great hope of His mercy in such a patient endurance of all the wrongs and griefs of His most bitter Passion: and especially in those places, where He was dragged and wounded. Whence to wipe out the malice of men and to cleanse unclean places: He was most terribly afflicted in His most holy body by many. And He, who of old laid a curse upon the world because of the sins of men: now by the shedding of His sacred blood promised all penitents a blessing and remission of sin. Moreover He overthrew by the word of His preaching the idols of the gentiles and the temples of the demons: and He destroyed the altars and the names of false gods; and in place of the sacrilegious rite of the pagans and the calves of the Jews: He instituted the true and new sacrifice of His precious body to be celebrated in many places. For therefore He made many temples and altars be consecrated in many regions to the honour of His name and the saints; that the faith of Christians may stand firm: and the divine worship flourish with the praises of

hymns. Yea also, to adorn the place of the dwelling of His glory, and to render illustrious the house of prayer with most holy relics: He placed there the devout and precious symbols of His Passion as an everlasting memorial: and erected the holy cross as a triumphal token of vanquished death, as a gage of covenant and peace between God and man: and as a brazen bow against the fear of the devil.

It is fitting therefore that now in divers places by all the faithful of Christ, by small and great, by poor and rich, by wise and unskilled, by strong and weakly, by prelates and subjects, throughout the whole world, with open doors and in the voice of all tongues, Christ suffering be preached, praised and glorified: and raised higher than every name in Heaven and on earth, for all the insults and pains, wrought Him in many places by many persons. Thou then also shouldst for the sake of devotion, aroused on this holy Good Friday, picture in thy mind all the places of the Lord's Passion, and traverse Jerusalem in spirit; and often lift thine eyes to the image of the Crucified: and with deep compassion see the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, how great and numerous they were. Then crave forgiveness, that He may mercifully pardon thee: as often as in any place, or time, thou hast offended Him. Thou canst also visit the altars of thy church, and prostrate thyself on the ground; kiss the pavement, or predella of the altar, three or five times: in memory of the blood of Christ poured out upon the earth.

Thou shouldst also, for the love and honour of Christ, ever hold in reverence all the places of holy Church consecrated to God, all monasteries

and hospices, wherever religious life is practised and God served; and rejoice in their good actions, and sympathize with their misfortunes: that thereby thou mayest merit to become a sharer of all the good that is there done day and night to the praise of God. For speedily he shall obtain forgiveness of God: whoever truly grieving for his sins, firmly purposes for the future to amend. He also shall gain great confidence of the divine mercy; who in every matter and petition takes as his help the Passion of Christ: and trusts more in the merits of Christ and the prayers of the saints than in his own labours and virtues. For our works, strictly examined: are seldom found wholly pure. And therefore it is needful to have recourse to humility and the remedy of confession; ever to seek mercy of God and to place our whole hope of salvation in Christ: Who alone is perfect in all things. For He can speedily and entirely heal our imperfections: and bestow fuller grace on the humble and contrite of heart.

Of the seventh point, in what members Christ suffers.

In the seventh, and last place, thou shouldst heed and with immense grief consider, in what members Christ suffered: and what pains He endured for us in every joint and in the five senses of the body. O what cruel blows He bore in the scourging: how many thousands of wounds were inflicted on Him; how often He was struck again in the same place: how painfully He felt all this and yet held His peace. He did not stretch out His hand, and moved not a foot or other member from the blows; but willingly and freely gave up His whole body to the strikers: that He might fully satisfy for the sins of all men. For as it was shown in a vision to a certain religious, as often as Christ received a blow from the scourger; at

once He offered it to the Father out of love for us: begging also that He would forgive our crimes. For the so beloved Son murmured not once against the Father, because He exposed Him to such sufferings; He threatened not them that cruelly tortured Him: He was not angry with them that shamefully spat upon Him, nor cursed them that falsely accused Him; but rather grieved: excused, endured: and prayed for them, that they might receive pardon, saying, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." Luke, 23. 34.

But what was the cause of such suffering and boundless sorrow? Assuredly, the many sins of men; who in their many members most frequently sin with their five senses: and grievously offend God. For the members of the body whereby they should serve God, and could work much good; these, alas, casting out the fear of God, with bold daring they give over to divers vanities and wicked pleasures: and so sinning, become the slaves of vice, and members and vessels of the demons. Wherefore Christ, the Son of God, compassionating men and desiring to heal sinners and deliver them from the snares of the devil, received and endured grievous and continued tortures in His most sacred body; that by bodily sufferings in His five senses He might bring medicine to our souls: and teach that all delights of the flesh, which war against the spirit, should be avoided and mortified. That God therefore might not for ever punish for his sin man, who, forsaking the supreme good, cleaved to creatures; the loving Lord Jesus underwent this temporal penalty in His own person and the death of the flesh for our sins without any guilt of His own: to appease the wrath of the Father, and deliver us from eternal pains.

But now turn the eye of the heart to the different limbs pierced with wounds: and pour forth tears with pious affection of pity. Begin from the sole of the foot; and go up to the crown of the head: for the whole body of Jesus is full of the most bitter torment. For indeed, if thou wert now in such pain, or wert lying in bed oppressed with sickness; would he not please thee, who sympathized with thee, and he displease thee, who passed thee carelessly by? See then the Lord Jesus suffering for thee, wounded and dead for thee; and have for all His sorrows at least a sigh; if thou canst not shed a tear. For when
Acts, 8. 2. blessed Stephen was stoned: men fearful and faithful made great mourning over him. And behold here a greater than Stephen, yea, the greatest of saints, beyond all the saints, hangs on the cross full of wounds; and therefore justly should every faithful soul condole with Him: but especially the devout religious, who has renounced the world. Regard therefore, first, how grievously Christ suffered and was wounded in His beautiful and innocent feet, wherewith He walked, often wearied, through the land preaching the word of God: wherewith He trod the waves of the sea passing over without a boat, without human aid. For by that virtue and power whereby He created all things: He could also command the winds and the sea, and use them as He chose. But, alas, what a wondrous change: and what an incomprehensible ordinance of God; that the Author of all creatures and the supreme physician of bodies and souls, Who made many lame and infirm of a sudden able to walk: is now so fiercely wounded in His feet, so pitilessly bored with iron nails; so that He cannot even walk nor move: but like the

wicked thief is held bound to the cross by cruel bonds. With such pain then was fastened in each foot the blameless Christ: who, according to the prophet, looseth them that are fettered, enlighteneth the blind: lifteth up them that are cast down, loveth the just. And why this? Certainly, to loose the bonds of our sins, and to wash the stains of our feet: which are very often contracted in running, walking, wandering, playing, dancing. O how grievously they sin, who tread the poor under foot: who travel with pomp: who make disturbance in church, and trouble them that pray: who scandalize many by frivolous excursions and dissolute conduct. Wo to those that for weariness in good work and want of devotion, seek consolation in news and external affairs. For if these were fastened by one nail of the fear of the Lord, they would assuredly abide alone willingly by themselves, thinking on the Passion of Christ: or read somewhat from holy Writ, whereby being touched they might be inflamed to the love of Christ: by Whom they would overcome all the bitter and sweet of the world. Blessed the feet of them, who are ready to hear the word of God: who, leaving vain things aside, haste to the church: often engage in prayer, refrain their senses from wandering: so that with a good conscience they may say, "I have restrained my feet from every evil way: that I may keep Thy words." Blessed the feet that follow the steps of Jesus even to the cross: and love to stand there and weep with Mary, rather than go to banquets and assist at shows.

Ps. 145. 7, 8.

Ps. 118. 101.

Christ also suffered and was grievously wounded in His holy hands, whereby He often gave blessing, touched the sick and made them whole;

with which He took bread and eat: consecrated His body, and gave to His disciples for their comfort. But, O loving God, why dost Thou suffer Thy hands to be dug with such pain, and to be covered with so much blood; Who didst stretch out the heavens without toil, and didst adorn the earth with wondrous beauty? Alas, holy God, strong and immortal, behold Thy hands which formed the first man in Paradise, without defect, without any vice; now, alack, by evil men and wicked hands are pierced with the iron nails of the Jews; and in the sight of Thy friends stretched out on the cross, then accursed by all: and held as the greatest scandal. But, O good, most sweet Jesus, this wrong and violence Thou didst will to bear most patiently for our first parents and their children: that Thou mightest tear up the handwriting of the decree, and wash out with Thy holy blood original sin, contracted by the touch of the forbidden tree and the eating of the fatal apple: that, whence death sprang through sin: thence salvation might come back through suffering. Therefore at the demand of justice, Thou didst stretch out both hands on the wood of the cross for the wiping out of guilt: and under the impulse of charity, with bleeding hands Thou didst pray for all sinners.

O how grateful and acceptable was that offering for us; when Thou, most loving Jesus, only Son of God, didst present Thyself an everlasting sacrifice to appease the face of God the Father Almighty, Whom we all offend in many things; from which we cannot be justified by ourselves, save by the intervention of Thy most sacred Passion, and Thy death in time on the tree of the cross: whence issued our sanctification and

redemption in the gaining of eternal salvation. Give heed, here, to the grievousness of our sins and the bitterness of the wounds of Christ; the affection of His charity, and His pleading for His enemies: His mildness also towards all them that afflicted Him. Very often Christ prayed, and taught His disciples to pray: sometimes with bended knees, sometimes with eyes raised to Heaven; but nowhere do we find Him pray so tearfully and lovingly, as now we hear Him: when with outstretched hands and transpierced feet, and all His members racked and wounded, He prayed for His enemies on the altar of the cross. For then He poured forth a prayer most sweet in the Father's ears, that He should forgive them that sinned against Him. Therefore to restrain the malice of men, who are quick to anger, and slow to do good to their foes: Christ received most wide wounds in His hands, instructing all to do good and suffer evil; for it is accounted very great gain: if a man pays back to his adversaries, not the retaliation of vengeance, but the gift of prayer. Take heed therefore, O man, poor, frail and vicious: lest with evil word or wicked deed thou injure or sadden anyone, for whom Christ suffered and died; for precious in His sight is every soul that faithfully believes in Him: and truly keeps His commandments. But it is meet that thou think well of thy neighbour and hope for better things; because such a one is either already good, or by grace he can speedily amend. Do thou therefore show charity and beg also God the Father; that whom thou now hast an enemy: thou mayest again receive him a brother brought to a better mind. But if he has wronged thee; forgive from thy heart for the love of Jesus Christ: Who

has spared thee in many things. For He was loving and compassionate towards all; He despised not the poor, He shunned not the leper: He mocked not the feeble, He soothed the sad, He calmed the angry; He bore with the perverse, He received the repentant: He instructed the erring, He defended the innocent; He strengthened the wavering, He showed charity towards all: and what is more wonderful, struck with blows and wounds, He ceased not from prayer. Behold how Christ by enduring the evil, by consoling the good, presented an example of excellent teaching in His Passion for both sound and sick: and, as it were with the two arms of His love, drew to Himself foe and friend alike; reckoning not their crimes, if only they will be reconciled to God, and forgive all offences to them that trespass against them: and moreover keep mutual charity.

Christ also suffered very painfully in His most holy head, as in the chief member of His body, for all the lower members, which we are, who believe in Him: and cleave to Him by faith and love. For every faithful soul as a living and sound member ought to suffer and be wounded together with Christ his head in all His pains; for the member that does not feel and mourn for its wounded and sick head: is either corrupt or unsound. Therefore, if thou art a member of Christ, and livest and savourest of the spirit of Christ; give heed now to the head of Christ, the Son of the living God: and see with what sharp thorns it is pierced all round for thy sins. It is not easy to say how grievous, how long, how keen was this pain in the blessed and noble head of Jesus, consecrated above all the heads of saints and

Nazarenes, the holy crown of which sharp scissors had not touched: and a hair had not fallen from His head to the ground; unless perchance the impious Jews, with the retainers of the Prefect, furiously tore some hairs from His holy head, or with unworthy hands plucked at His sacred beard. For they are accounted to have inflicted many insults and blows upon Christ: which are not singly narrated by the evangelists. However, St. Luke tells us that "blaspheming many other things they said against Him." For some openly derided Christ as a fool: others, more perverse, added insulting words: others, more cruel than brute beasts, ground their teeth against Him, and struck Him with blows not a few; and maybe with their heels they trod upon the sacred feet of Jesus: which recently Mary Magdalene washed with many tears, and anointed. Ah, Lord God, how deeply the points of the thorns entered Thy most holy head: how cruelly they tore the tender skin of Thy flesh with the bones and nerves; so that from the wounds they made streams of blood flowed down Thy neck, down Thy eyes, down Thy ears and face: and utterly obscured Thy comely countenance and all its former beauty. O wicked and provoking generation, why dost thou so severely punish the guiltless? Why dost thou oppress the loving and lowly one; and as in a ring torture His head? Certainly, falsely dost thou lay it to His charge that He made Himself king; for never here did He bear regal ornaments according to the style of the world: He neither wore shoes, nor desired a crown. No man also did He harm by word or deed: yea, rather He delivered them that were wronged and oppressed by the devil.

Luke, 22. 65.

Daughters of Jerusalem and all devout matrons,

come and see Christ the King, Jesus of Nazareth, the true and peaceful Solomon, sprung from the royal house of David; see how on the day of His crowning, He is crowned with a crown of thorns, by His wicked stepmother, the synagogue: while the devil encourages, and the envy of the priests urges. Then most abundantly wept His most blessed Mother Mary with Saint Mary Magdalene, and all her company utterly desolate: wept also the disciples scattered in the Jewish crowd for shame and sorrow at the sight of the thorny diadem, which was most cruelly pressed upon the sacred brow of Christ, their lord and Master: while the judge cried before the raging people,

John, 19. 14. "Behold your King."

Think now, all ye faithful, if ever you have heard or read of such disgrace and such most bitter pain in any of the holy kings or prophets of old, as at this time wrought on the Lord of prophets; on the King of angels, the Prelate of all priests: on the Lamb of God, Who came to take away the sins of the world by various torments of bodily punishment. Behold He, Who before was resplendent in signs and great powers; is now most irreverently treated with many mockeries: and struck with rods and scourges. He, Whom the princes ought to have honoured exceedingly, and to have received for the true King and High Priest; now they dishonour with unheard of insults: and torture with a crown of most sharp piercing. For all work the very opposite of the many favours shown them: and bitterly rage against the Author of their salvation. For instead of roses and lilies: they offer Him sharp thorns. For gems and jewels: they give Him cruel blows. For a royal crown: a garland of

sea-rushes. For a collar of gold: striking without pity. For a garment of fine linen: the white robe of a fool with shame. For regal purple: the drops of His red blood. For silver belt: a waistband of thin cotton. For kingly sceptre: a reed shaken by the wind. For a horse He had an ass: for bridle, a rope. For sword, a rod: for shield, the scourge. For buskins, naked thighs: for gloves, handcuffs. For gilded spurs: iron nails in His feet. For battle-standard: the cross with its title inscribed. For breast-plate, the seamless tunic: for helmet, the veil over His eyes. For regal spear: the soldier's lance. For pontifical mitre: the napkin on His naked head. For the doctor's chair: the marble pillar. For goblet, a sponge: for flask, a vinegar cruet. For wine, vinegar: for nectar, myrrh: for mead, most bitter gall. For a kiss, spittle: for compassion, the arrow of scorn: for greeting He received the word of curse. Besides these things already told: hear yet other sorrows of EXTREME DESOLATION. For HE WAS FORSAKEN BY THE FATHER IN HIS GREATEST DISTRESS, AS IF HE WERE NOT HIS BELOVED SON. He was abandoned by all His friends and disciples as a stranger and wanderer. He lost his noble companions: He found most bitter foes. He lost Saint Peter, His defender: He found Malchus, Peter's accuser. What more? For accountant, He had a thief: for secretary, a traitor. For standard-bearer, Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross: for chamberlain, the wicked thief, who reproached Him. For infirmarian, a mocker: for wardrober, one who stripped Him. For refectorian, a brewer of gall: for dormitory, the tomb: for bed, the hard stone cut out of the rock. However, amid these wrongs, wrought on

the Lord Christ, there were not wanting the laments of friends; but they were concealed and stood afar off: they were silent and mourned: for never was seen such evil in Israel: since the day whereon Jesus was born in Bethlehem. But all these things were done by the divine ordinance for our salvation: and to fulfil the sacred oracles of the prophets. Behold with these weapons is armed our King, Christ Jesus of Nazareth, setting out to fight against the prince of the world: and to redeem by His precious blood the human race. He fought even to death, He overcame the pride of the devil by humility: the rage of the world by patience: the petulance of the flesh by the most bitter suffering of the cross. He left us holy examples of life: holy good words for meditation; and against all vices He gave mast excellent remedies to shun sin: and to attain the rewards of eternal life by the cross. To Whom be praise and glory for every good in Heaven and on earth: for endless ages of ages. Amen.

XXVII

On Palm Sunday, of the Procession of Christ, and of the six classes of Men, who honour Christ.

(*First Sermon.*)

Matt. 21. 8. THE *children of the Jews taking olive boughs: went out to meet the Lord.* It gives pleasure to contemplate on this, the Feast of Palms, the solemn procession of holy Church: as also the devotion of the Jewish people honouring Christ with great

joy and praise. For what the Jews bodily offered Christ, living in the flesh: we ought to offer spiritually to the same, now reigning in Heaven. And it is beseeming to do this the more fondly with devout hymns and canticles: the more God loves the inner worship of our heart: and desires to bring us to the Jerusalem which is above. For on this account especially He came on earth: to recall the dwellers of earth to Heaven. On this account He hastened to the place of suffering: to make ready for us the habitation of a most happy home in Heaven. In token whereof also He ordered an ass and her colt to be brought to Him; and, meekly riding, led them into the city of the earthly Jerusalem, which is a figure of the blessedness of Heaven: that we might hope to be led back by Christ to life everlasting with the holy angels: Who shall raise our animal body from the dust of the earth: and shall clothe it with the glory of immortality in the future resurrection of the just. And to merit this who shall be able to be worthy? Assuredly he, who shall humble himself as a little child among the Hebrew children: and shall become as a pious beast of burden under the feet of Christ: showing himself ready in every place and time FOR THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD. For whosoever shows himself meek and humble among his brethren: and regards himself as a rough ass and unprofitable servant on account of some defect, or unfitness which he perceives in himself; he for his humble self-esteem will please Christ more and be nearer to Him: than that haughty Pharisee, who, like a proud horse, vaunted himself of his good deed. The simplicity of the ass, if he errs, shall be more excusable: than the perversity of the proud horse

who kicks against the goad. Christ therefore chose the ass to ride for its meekness: He rejected the horse, which might neigh and bite others. Thus also Christ now takes the simple and lowly man to serve Him; and places on his back the yoke of holy religion: that by the law of life and discipline he may walk a straight and even road to the heavenly Jerusalem after death.

Consider, therefore, what and how great virtues Christ showed us by His human nature in this procession: Who, while He was supreme and rich and powerful above all, as the true Son of God according to the divinity; nevertheless, did not display the excellence of His majesty before the people by worldly pomp: but with much humility and meekness approached the city, rebellious against Him. This is our King, Whom John Baptist proclaimed as the Lamb, that was to come into the world: Who for the salvation of the human race drew near to the place of suffering, to accomplish the work of our redemption: as it had been revealed to the holy patriarchs and prophets. He did not turn aside from the face of His enemies: nor dread the holy place, because of the malice of the people; but with the greatest charity and compassion approached to the envious and enraged, to calm their passions: moreover for their coming excesses and evil deeds He mourned and wept. He heeded not the applause and praise of men: but had His eye open to the future dangers of the perverse: speaking thus to them that securely rejoiced: "For if thou also hadst known what things threaten thee: thou wouldst doubtless rather grieve and weep with Me." "For the heart of the wise is where there

Eccl. 7. 5.

is mourning: and the heart of the fool where there is mirth." For by sadness the soul of the sinner is amended: and by mirth the state of the religious mind often becomes dissolute. And so much the further is a man from God and the colder in himself: the more intensely and the longer he is engaged in external affairs. The Lord therefore gave good counsel to those that are in honour, and in repute with men, and take pleasure in the society of friends, namely, that they turn their eyes from things present: and weigh with earnest thought, how speedily these trivial joys pass away. Wherefore let the distracted soul come back to the actions of Christ, performed this day: and cast aside all worldly occupations; gather flowers of good thoughts from Holy Writ: and with interior exercises, as with fresh palms, hasten to meet the heavenly King. And even if she behold, or hear in the chanting some outward matters pertaining to the feast, let her not tarry merely there: but diligently seek what saving mystery be concealed herein.

It is to be remarked therefore that in to-day's procession of Christ six classes of the good are found: who honour the approach of Christ by some pious act. Some go before, others follow: some cut down boughs; others spread their garments: some bear, and others walk near the King. No one stands here idle: no one is intent on chatter; each man keeps his place: each joyfully fulfils his duty. But these things can be beautifully understood in a mystic and moral sense: and so interpreted to the instruction of faith and the discipline of morals. Thus, those, who go before Christ, are the patriarchs and pro-

phets; who foretold many mysteries concerning Christ to the people: and desired with great desire to see Christ. But those, who follow Christ, are His disciples and other faithful converted by Christ; who, forsaking their possessions and worldly cares, perfectly imitated Christ: and drew many others by word and example to a good life. And those, who cut down branches from the trees, are the rulers of churches and preachers of the word of God throughout the world; who by their study gather, as so many flowers and leafy boughs, beautiful and profitable sayings from the holy books and treatises of the doctors: which afterwards, preaching in the church, they faithfully display to the people. And lest weak or ignorant hearers should dash their foot against a stone of scandal on the way, because of the difficulty of the commandments: therefore to make smooth the path of heavenly life, good teachers bring forth many examples of the saints, as flowers of roses and lilies of the valley; alleging now the patience of the martyrs, now the toils of confessors: now the modesty of virgins. But those, who lay their garments in the way; are the good dispensers of worldly goods, who refresh with meat and drink the poor and beggars: lest they faint on the way, by reason of their daily sufferings. These then take of the things that are superfluous for them and also some things that are needful, both of clothing and money: to give mercifully to the naked and needy; thereby, through earthly alms bestowed for Christ: to receive eternal rewards in the kingdom of God after the burial of their bodies. There were formerly in holy Church many thus ardently burning with divine love: who not only gave exterior

and temporal things to the poor, or by vow forsook everything: but also in time of persecution delivered their bodies to divers torments for the faith of Christ. These certainly, above other despisers of the world in the way of God and the procession of Christ, threw down their bodies, as if they were garments and heavy burdens to their souls, and cast them on the ground to be trodden on by evil men; so that they might receive with the holy angels, amid the joys of Heaven, everlasting crowns: for all the tortures inflicted on them in time. But those, who bear Christ, are the ass and her colt: having upon them indeed the garments of the apostles, but going forward at the word of Christ. By these are signified good and devout religious, forsaking the world; who enter the cloister, called to Christ by the teaching of the apostles: take upon them by a rule His sweet yoke and light burden; loving chastity, observing obedience: and living under the discipline of superiors; holding the bit of silence in their mouth: and humbly bowing their back and neck to correction under the rod; and bearing all this for the sake of Christ, Who called them from the vanity of the world, and bound them to His service: piously and willingly throughout the space of their whole life.

But those, who walk on the way near the King, are the apostles: and they from the side catch brief glimpses of His countenance. These are contemplative men, utterly separated from affairs of the world; given chiefly to solitude and silence: often intent upon prayer, reading, holy meditation; and languishing with frequent sighs for the things of Heaven, with utmost desire they long to see Christ in His glory; and by a special grace,

interiorly recollected and sometimes suddenly lifted above themselves in the spirit: for a brief space they gaze upon the face of Christ, as it were in a side glance. For deeming all visible and created goods as nothing and of no moment, for the greatness of His sweetness: they despise and cast away every thing, that holds back and hinders leisure in God.

From the foregoing gather that there are two orders of them that praise the Lord; one, which goes before: the other, which follows Christ. And all these with one voice sing in harmony; all proclaim that Christ has come in the flesh: and confess Christ the King born of the seed of David. By these singers are befittingly designated the ministers of holy Church, appointed to chant, and to celebrate the Divine Office; who at certain seasons recite psalms, hymns and other canticles taken from the histories of the Old and the New Testament to the praise of God: and singing with cheerful heart and mouth, strive to raise themselves and others to the heavenly promises; lest, wearied by the fatigue and labour of the present life, they be delayed in their arrival at the heavenly Jerusalem: whither to-day Christ, the King of Israel, our Creator, of His own will preceded us by the cross. Each, according to his state and order and office: shall receive his own reward in proportion to his toil. Every faithful servant of God then, whether he be a cleric, or tonsured monk, or beneficed priest, ought to be very diligent and ready to sing in the church in the sight of Christ and the saints; and take example from the Hebrew children: who praised Christ with a loud voice even to the highest heavens. For as often as a cleric, or monk chants less livelily in

the choir, or withdraws his voice: or also, engaged with vain fancies, thinks over outside matters, and gives scant heed to each divine word; so often does he lose a precious jewel from the crown of his head: and suffer a beautiful and very sweet-smelling rose to be stolen and carried away from the sanctuary of God by the enemy. Let therefore the religious, honoured with the title of chorister of Christ, appointed to chant and pray to God, take care: that as soon as the bell is rung for the canonical Hours, he come not slowly to choir; and stand not there with weariness and wandering mind: lest perchance the deceitful enemy secretly enter, and take the psalm from his mouth, or the meaning from his heart; and he lose the merit of his holy labour by his heedlessness: and offend Christ and the holy angels, because he has done his duty ill. So much for the praise and singing of the good children: to excite the devotion of all religious.

But now let us take further pleasure in examining the apparel and appearance of our humble King, seated upon the colt of an ass: Who, when He was in the midst of the rejoicing people, showed no smile, but wept. Nowhere in all the pages of the Old Testament do I find any of the kings of Israel, or Jerusalem, riding so humbly: or without warlike arms and sounding trumpets hastening against the enemy. Nowhere in all the life of Christ do I find any such action; as now on this day our Saviour performed in the presence of so great a multitude of people singing together: and therefore there is cause to wonder in so unusual a proceeding. Finally, we read that Jesus often went through the cities and towns, preaching the word of God: also that He was

wearied with His journey; but still I do not learn that He made use of the service of any beast of burden, to be seated more at His ease: or to arrive more speedily at the place desired. "But who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been His counsellor?" I believe and remark that this was a divine counsel; to fulfil the holy word of the prophet long before foretold: that Christ, the King of Israel, was to come in lowly guise and the spirit of meekness. Many perhaps knew not of whom the prophet spake: but when Christ in His own person fulfilled in deed, what the prophet had formerly precisely expressed by words; then without a doubt it was believed and well understood, that of Him it had been written: "and these things they did to Him," as blessed John testifies. Christ therefore came, the King of kings, the Lord, not in the hand of might to fill men with fear, as worldly princes do: but to give an example of humility, whereby they might easily direct their steps to the heavenly kingdom. For there is a great distance between the King of Heaven and of the world: between poor Christ and wealthy Solomon. For Solomon commencing to reign in Jerusalem, was set upon the mule of King David; but Christ, in the beginning of His conflict with the devil, sat upon the colt of an ass. The former mounted to the sound of the trumpet: the latter, to the singing of children. The former rejoiced, clothed in royal apparel: the latter wept, because of the peril of the city, where David reigned thirty-three years. In which action indeed He showed that he belonged to David's race: Who, claiming the heritage of His fathers, entered the temple of Solomon; which also He honoured, rendering it illustrious by

Rom. 11. 34.

John, 12. 16.

3 Kings, 1. 33.

glorious signs and teaching: healing the sick and instructing the people. Whence also the people, rejoicing greatly in the coming of Christ their King, cried: "A blessing that the kingdom of our father David has come: hosanna in the highest." But it seems strange, that a rude and ignorant people, was not ashamed of so poor a king: nor offended at His lowly guise. For there was in Him no outward show of royal splendour; but, as before He was wont to go barefoot and with uncovered head: so now He approached the royal city devoid of all kingly apparel. And they were not scandalized in Him, because He came poor; but turned the eyes of their mind to the proofs of His divinity: and were the more edified by the lowliness of His raiment. O Jerusalem, behold thy King's humility and meekness and justice and poverty, above all the kings of the earth; for, lo, He comes without the armour of strong men, without the sound of trumpets, without horses and mules: without sword and breastplate, without shield and lance; without bow and arrow, without crown of gold, without mitre, without fillet: without girdle, without cloak, without helmet, without bonnet; without buskins, without bridle, without spurs, without standard, without sceptre: without all earthly tumult and military pomp. For all this belongs not to His charge and wont: Who came to teach contempt of the world by word and example. But He took in His riding a poor animal accustomed to the yoke, in token of poverty and innocence; that from His humble gait He might appear loving and lovable: rather than a terrible king and hard master. He took, as His company, poor and unarmed men; the wealthy and mighty He sent away:

because His kingdom was not of this world, but of Heaven from eternity. In much He went contrary to earthly kings and princes; because He came to call the humble and poor, such as were His disciples: to whom he promised to give the kingdom of God, which no man shall be able to take from them by force. Whereto by His grace may He deign to bring us, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, the King of glory: Who is above all God, blessed for ever. Amen.

XXVIII

Of the riding of Christ, not in Pharaoh's Chariot, but on the Ass of humility

(Second Sermon.)

Matt. 21. 2. *O ye into the village, which is over against you: and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.* What is this, most sweet Jesus, my King and my God, that Thou sendest Thy disciples for an ass; and not for a horse to serve Thee on this road, which Thou hast often walked bare-foot? Why dost Thou show Thyself poor and needy in everything: Whose are all things in Heaven and on earth, both men and brutes? When Thou wast born in Bethlehem of Juda, Thou didst not seek a grand palace; but a vile stable for Thy dwelling, and a narrow manger for Thy repose: and now, going into Jerusalem, Thou sendest for an ass to be loaned Thee for a short while. I wonder much and sympathize with Thy poverty, that, King of all the earth, Thou dost act so simply: and goest in procession without any royal raiment. O God,

was there not one of all Thy friends in Bethany, or Bethphage, to make ready for Thee a carriage, or give Thee one horse: that at least thus thou couldst ride more honourably into Jerusalem, and leave this ass behind? Which of the kings acted thus? It is read in the Book of Kings, that many horses were brought out of Egypt to Solomon, purchased at a great price: and how does it befall that not even one horse remains for use at Thy coming? A rare and new sight, unheard of from all time: that the King of ages has not in His whole army one horse to ride a brief space: but only the colt of an ass, on which no man had sat: which had neither a saddle for sitting, nor a bridle to hold it. O wondrous clemency of God, the Maker of the world has deigned to be the rider of an ass: when He progressed towards glorious Jerusalem. But there are many motives, and very reasonable and full of virtue: wherefore He mounted an ass and not a horse. Christ, the wisdom of the Father, did this, that the prophecy of His coming might not only be fulfilled in mystic words: but also proved to men in some outward fact as a testimony to them. A very great example of true humility also and of holy poverty He gave herein: to repress the pride and avarice of men: who delight in honours and wealth and a great family: seeking temporal glory, and the ease of luxury. For if our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, had had a beautiful horse in His train: who would be so poor as not to desire to ride horseback, and say that "Christ did the like? Why therefore is it not permitted me"? For the senses of men are prone to evil: and nearly all aspire to a high state. But now Christ, the King, lowly and meek, was content to come on an ass,

3 Kings, 10. 28.

as the Holy Ghost had foretold of Him, and He treads on the neck of the proud and haughty by His power: Who overthrows the back of kings: and brings to naught perverse and guileful minds. Therefore our King, God before the ages, and man born at the end of time, willed to show Himself such to men in every word, deed and gesture from His birth to the hour of His death, as to be an example of virtue and holiness to all, both subjects and prelates. He showed the way of true humility in the guise of great poverty; whereby any poor man may go up to the heavenly Jerusalem by a straight path without horse, without chariot, without ass, without mule: without scrip, without money, without dignity, without fine linen, without purple. In sooth of this holy way He Himself is the leader, companion, and forerunner: He is the warden and guide; Who, sent by the Father, came into the world: to make smooth and easy the path of humility, whereby Heaven is reached in safety. Let the poor give heed to this and be glad: let the meek hear and be comforted; because for the consolation of the poor our King, the Lord Christ Jesus, when He was rich and the prince of all: became for us poor and patient: that by His poverty He might make us rich in grace: and of mean, great in glory. He Himself therefore came to men in the guise of a poor man; poor He lived among men: poor He died for men. He had not a city or castle, or house of His own, as a noble inheritance; and yet to-day He was honoured by the poor and simple: and proclaimed aloud the King of Israel. Finally, that He might make known and acceptable the grandeur of His poverty to all the princes of the world: for the horse of pride

He had the colt of an ass: for captains and soldiers, poor disciples, unlettered fishermen: for armourers and shield-bearers, the simple people, tailors and weavers: for singers and buglers, innocent children, crying, Hosanna: for swords and clubs, palm and olive branches: which were the tokens of joy and peace, not of war or strife. Christ therefore came, the noble and peaceful King, only and beloved Son of the eternal Father, wishing to make peace again between God and men: between angels and sinners: between Jews and gentiles. Be not afraid, therefore, daughter of Sion: but be glad and rejoice, holy city Jerusalem; for He has come, not to punish thee, but to pray for thy sins: not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; not to ruin thy dwelling, but to deliver it from the power of the devil: not to strive in word, but to teach by conduct; not to oppress any by power: but to save by mercy: not to seek vengeance of the wrong done Him: but He came to suffer the cross and death for wickedness committed. Understand from His miracles how far He is above all the holy patriarchs and prophets: and believe that He is truly the Son of God, coequal with the Father: born of a virgin for the salvation of the world, to die for the redemption of all. Consider from the works of His human nature that He is meek and humble; spurning the glory of the world, enduring insults: returning good for evil. Behold such as He is: such also are His servants. He chose, as His soldiers and barons, men adorned with virtues, not with costly garments; men, who know how to fight against the devil by prayer: to subdue the flesh by fasting; and to overcome, by despising the wealth and honours of the world: as they learnt from Him,

and taught many others to wage the spiritual warfare. With these were united the good children, strangers to malice and strife: singing and praising the name of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord. For, from the greater even to the less, all engage in praise and thanksgiving; and rejoice in their heart in the presence and coming of their King, clap with their hands, chant aloud with joy: blessing God for all the virtues and signs, which they had seen and heard of Christ, the King, in their boundaries. O how wonderful and praiseworthy was this devotion: how pleasant the exultation of their mind when the humble Jesus, the Son of the eternal King, is led by innocent children into the temple of Solomon and into the place of the admirable tabernacle: where in type of His blessed Passion were offered the sheep victims, by the priests of the Mosaic law; who nevertheless were unable perfectly to cleanse anyone from sins according to the justice of the flesh: but according to the faith of the offerers, in the hope of salvation to be granted in Christ, complete remission and the comfort of the salvation of man was awaited. For, when a few days had passed, after that procession and manifestation of great honour: He was overwhelmed with confusion and sufferings more abundant: than ever before He had been honoured by the crowd. Finally, loaded with many insults and wounds, He was hanged on the cross; that the reality of the flesh, which He had assumed, might be made manifest: and the symbol of the legal victim in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb be fulfilled. These two works of Christ then, to wit, the procession and the Passion, are everywhere celebrated in Holy Church to-day: and

they possess in them great mysteries, well explained by saintly doctors. For the state of holy Church is figured in these two: which is wont to be frequently exercised by God through prosperity and adversity. The procession, which brings joy, is made and solemnized with palm branches, to the end: that the hearts of the faithful may be aroused to the love of heavenly joys. But this procession will then be perfectly accomplished, when all the saints, raised from the dead, will go to meet Christ in the air with glorified bodies. Then while angels sing, the elect shall enter the holy of holies: holding palms in their hands and lighted lamps full of oil. Then shall each receive eternal rewards according to his labours and merits: made joyful exceedingly in the dwellings prepared for him by God. But the Passion, which follows the procession, signifies this: that by the cross and Passion of Christ, and by many tribulations for Christ, the way is shown us: whereby after death the kingdom of God is reached. Wherein with Christ for ever they shall rejoice: who now devoutly celebrate His Passion; and mourn for pity; shed tears for love; mortify their flesh in imitation, offer prayers in thanksgiving: willingly hear Masses, with fear and reverence celebrate; refrain from things vain and idle: prepare themselves for divine grace by watchfulness over their heart; and in the commemoration of the Passion of Christ earnestly and sadly meditating, reading, toiling, enduring, so direct their whole purpose: that, utterly conformed to the sufferings of Christ here, they may be the more fully glorified hereafter. For when Christ shall come to reward the labours of all His elect: then shall He wipe away all tears from

their eyes. The present procession contains a short-lived joy: but the future procession of the saints shall possess everlasting praise. There is in sooth no festival more solemn, no fellowship more pleasant, no delight greater: no contemplation more excellent, no happiness more worthy, than to see Christ in His heavenly glory with the holy angels; when all the elect have been gathered in the most blessed city of the Jerusalem above, to reign with Christ for ever and ever: while the wicked and faithless have been given over and justly condemned with the devil to eternal flames. From which evils may He guard and save us; but rather gather us with His elect and place us at His right hand in His kingdom: Who by His Passion and cross deigned to redeem us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XXIX

Of the Resurrection of Christ, and the Spiritual Consolation of the Soul

HAVE risen and I am still with thee, alleluia. It is the word of Christ to the Church, and to every faithful soul overwhelmed with sorrow for His Passion: and as it were deprived of all comfort. Christ then rising from the dead addresses her in the spirit: with the joyous greeting of His mouth, He most lovingly consoles her, saying: "I have risen and I am still with thee. I have not forgotten thee: but MINDFUL OF MY PROMISE, as a most victorious conqueror of death I appear to thee, and announce to thee the joys of everlasting bliss; so that thou mayest rejoice with

Me in the ineffable glory of the resurrection, which I have received: because I am never to lose it, nor to die again. Yesterday indeed thou didst grieve and weep much for My Passion: but now weep no more; for I have risen indeed: and am still with thee in the presence of majesty, Who suffered from the weakness of the flesh. Now I am crowned with a higher glory, and clothed with the light of immortality: Who the day before yesterday hung upon the cross condemned to a most disgraceful death. For three days I lay in the tomb; but now I live," saith the Lord thy Redeemer, "and thou shalt live because of Me. This day I have risen from the dead by the glory of the Father; and thou shalt rise on the last day with My Elect raised from the tomb by the power of God: and to be crowned according to thy deserts. Sing therefore in the voice of exultation; and with great thanksgiving offer devout canticles of praise, singing, alleluia: and raising thyself to the heavenly feasts. With heart and voice together rejoice, O daughter of Sion, for the hour of temporal sorrow has passed; and the day of endless joy has returned: the hope of thy glory to come. Let the Jews be sad, who crucified Me; let the gentiles be confounded, who mocked Me: let all those fear, who would not believe in Me. But let THE FAITHFUL rejoice, WHO LOVE ME: let all the peoples be comforted, who, hearing My Passion, grieved and wept. Let the disciples draw near Me, who were scattered and fled: and abandoned Me amid My torments. Let the humble and devout come to Me: let the priests go before and the ministers clothed in white; let all Christians approach My table with supreme reverence: and let all the nations celebrate this

day of Easter, on which I rose. For I am the resurrection and the life; I am the living bread coming down from Heaven: Who give life to the world. I am the good Shepherd, Who feed My sheep, SIMPLE AND OBEDIENT: forsaking their own will, and following Mine IN ALL THINGS. I am the hidden manna, the joy of angels, the pasch of Christians, the happiness of the saints; rejoicing the angels with unveiled vision: and communicating men on earth with My sacrament. Be not therefore troubled, as if despised in the world; be not saddened, as though forsaken of God: be not afraid, as one besieged by enemies. I HAVE NOT AND WILL NOT ABANDON thee: I HAVE NOT AND WILL NOT CAST THEE OFF; but in much I will prove thee, and by divers trials will lead thee: and as gold in the fire I will try thee and cleanse thee. AND IN TIME OF DISTRESS I WILL APPEAR TO THEE; AND COMFORT THEE BY My PRESENCE, pouring in the grace of devotion: FIRST GIVING THEE TO DRINK of the wine of compunction, then ANOINTING WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS; that thou mayest shed tears, and experience wondrous sweetness: and be WHOLLY on fire and melted. Thus, thus will I console them that mourn for Me in this vale of tears; WHO TURN AWAY FROM TRIFLES: and turn to their interior. I have care of thee: and My eyes are upon My faithful; that they may sit with Me in the kingdom of My Father: and see My glory, which I have had from eternity, and have prepared for My friends. I will give them A FULL WAGE: when they also shall rise from the dead glorious and incorrupt. Therefore was it that I endured death, routed hell, overcame the devil; delivered the holy fathers from Limbo, opened the gates of Paradise: that I might bring all My

elect into everlasting bliss. But do not think thyself parted from this joy, or a stranger to the happy fellowship of the saints; for, although thou art still encompassed by mortality, and livest in the midst of temptations: nevertheless later thou shalt enjoy My vision, if thou abidest faithful and constant, following My footsteps even to the end: as I also continued in the love of My Father, obedient even to death. Be therefore strong in temptation, and patient in every tribulation: that thou mayest be a fellow of My eternal glory. Nor give up hope, whatever danger threatens: or however much all human comfort is withdrawn. I AM NOT WONT TO PASS BY THE SAD, OR TO SPURN HIM, WHO PRAYS: but graciously to hear him, who calls to Me with groaning. I try him, who struggles: I will crown him, who perseveres. I suffer my beloved to be tried a while; and when he least thinks it, or DEEMS HIMSELF UNWORTHY OF ANY COMFORT: of a sudden I appear and illumine him unaware. Thus I did with My disciples: and with the dear visitors of My holy sepulchre. For they were in great sadness; they lost all hope, they knew of no comfort: they could not tell what to do, or whither to go. Nothing was MORE DEAR TO THEM meanwhile than to weep BITTERLY, and often to seek: whether they could learn anything concerning Me. But WHEN ALL HELP OF MAN FAILED, AT ONCE THE HELP OF GOD WAS THERE. And it befell them much more happily: than they could have imagined. For I made My angels go before to tell the good news; that they might not remain inconsolate too long: but that, roused to the hope of life, they might look for the King of glory. I delayed therefore to appear at once, that their desire of seeking Me might grow, and they

become more purified to see Me; thereby to rejoice more abundantly, when I should be seen, embrace Me more devoutly: and worship with greater reverence. I knew the time and the manner to comfort the sad: and how much the minds of mortal men could hold. I did not therefore despise the desires of the pious, nor reject the grief of the afflicted; but I tried their faith, instructed their ignorance, strengthened their weakness; enkindled their love, cast out their fear. And so by weeping, praying, seeking, knocking, persevering: they merited to behold Him Whom they desired. And I fulfilled the
John, 16. 22. word which I foretold; that 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man shall take from you.' Thou therefore, hearing this, prepare thee for the grace of devotion; wait patiently until I come, and again I will visit thy heart freeing thee from all distress: and bringing thee to a state of NEW EXULTATION. Then thou shalt be able to sing psalms with joy, and to know by experience: how true and pleasant is that introit, 'I have risen and I am still with thee, alleluia.'"

XXX

Of the Joy of the Lord's Resurrection

Ps. 117. 24. *THIS is the day, which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein.* A great spiritual joy indeed this so solemn festival of Easter provides us. We are to rejoice then therein not according to the flesh, nor according to the vanity of the world: but according to God, in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Now more abundant grace

is to be sought and a more spotless purity observed: now by the pursuit of a new life the soul is to be transported into heavenly desire. For with just cause the Lord has made this day the most glorious and holy: to rejoice therein above all the festivals of the year. Now let all say, let each say: "Hail, most glorious day, which has shone upon us after the foul darkness of hell." For He Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory and Prince of the kings of the earth, this day arose from the dead: and brought the hope of eternal life to all the faithful, believing in Him throughout the world. For when He rose with the flesh, which He took from the Virgin Mary, and offered for us on the cross: the handwriting of our damnation was wiped away: and the gate of eternity unlocked to us with the victory over death. Open then thy mouth, devout soul: and sing with sonorous voice with the whole Catholic Church: in true joy of heart. "This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein, alleluia." O truly sweet and noble verse: which is so gladly chanted, so often repeated in the canonical Hours; and with its harmony arouses devotion, and recalls the wandering: and most eagerly draws to Christ. Listen therefore, not only to the sweet sounding melody without, but heed the sense of the holy words concealed within: and by the beauty of the chant rise to the inner things of the mind: lest thou lose the fruit of thy labour through the music of the voice: who in the Holy Ghost art bidden to chant psalms to God, and to sing with joy to the Lord ALONE IN THE HEART. Blessed he, who is occupied in these good things; and turns his whole intention towards the joys of the interior

Ps. 117. 24.

feast: thereby to tend to eternal glory by means
Coll. 3. 1. 2. of the festivals of time, as the Apostle says: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; mind the things that are above: not the things that are upon the earth." I know not what more gladsome and festive is sung the whole year: than that which is celebrated in these paschal days. For the voice and singing of all most frequently resounds with alleluia: and everything ends with alleluia. Wherein figuratively is shown us that which we are to do in the life eternal: when, delivered from present miseries, and carried into the heavenly repose, we shall praise God with the holy angels, filled in eternity with the sovereign good. Duly and reverently then Heaven and earth with all their fullness rejoice in the resurrection of Christ, and are bidden praise God; by Whom such precious gifts of spiritual unction are bestowed upon us: and still greater and higher will be given in the end. Behold now the elements, bound by the winter cold, gradually unfold: and with a certain spring-tide brightness prepare themselves for the coming feast. For the earth, long sterile and fallow, openly displays the fruitfulness of its power: and brings forth joyous buds. The trees and shrubs produce most sweet flowers: and are adorned with fresh leaves, as with new raiment. The grim frost has melted away, and the birds of the Heaven sweetly carol: and flying through the meadows and groves, rejoice that serenity of sky and fullness of harvest are returning. The sun and moon and stars above: diffuse their light with greater brilliance. In sooth no creature is now seen: but by its renovation applauds the risen Christ. When then such rejoicing is found in the

elements: what great gladness should there not be to angels and men, placed over the other creatures of the world. Verily this is the day, which the Lord hath made: as He most clearly shows us by the Scriptures, by figures, by prophets, by angels, by apostles and teachers: witnessing and preaching His resurrection. And where all are in harmony, and the highest as the lowest proclaim the same: no motive of doubt should now rest in the heart; for GOD ALMIGHTY IS ABLE MOST FULLY TO ACCOMPLISH ABOVE ALL THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND: AND TO BRING FORTH A NEW EFFECT FROM NON-EXISTENCE.

Now therefore, when Christ is glorified in the flesh, and the whole world is once more renovated: do thou also, mortal man, glorify God, and be renewed in the spirit of thy mind. Give thanks always to Thy Redeemer for His boundless gifts: bestowed upon thee and all the faithful. Lift up the eyes of thy heart; behold the way, whither Jesus the salvation of thy countenance has gone before: FOLLOW HIM WITH THE FOOTSTEPS OF LOVE even to the gate of Heaven. Thou hast before thine eyes the mirror of all holiness, and the light of heavenly life; walk securely after Jesus, the Bestower of eternal blessedness: the Ruler of Heaven and earth. No man is more holy than He, none more pure: none more glorious, none more rich, none more mighty. "All power is given to Me," He saith, "in Heaven and in earth." Therefore let thy faith stand firm in Jesus Christ: let thy hope flourish, thy charity exult. Do manfully and be strengthened; strive against the flesh, against the world, against the devil and his angels: fearing the onrush of no adverse power. For the Lion of the tribe of Juda conquers: Whose wrath

Matt. 28. 18.

no man can withstand; Whose hand no man shall escape: for all things have been placed beneath His feet. Now Heaven rejoices, earth applauds; Satan sorrows, death flees: and shall no longer have dominion over Christ. Under such a king then it is safe to fight, under such a shepherd it is pleasant to abide, to be fed and to be taught, to be subject and to be ruled: Who has need of no man, and is rich in all good things.

Do thou also then imitate the King of kings, the Lord thy God, rising from the dead; that for the rest thou mayest walk in the newness of a better life, treading vices under foot, forgetting past evils, returning not to wonted follies: but more fervently raising thyself to heavenly desires. For Christ, having conquered death, returned not to hell: but, having visited His close friends on earth, ascended joyously into Heaven; raising and exalting the form of the servant above the angelic powers: TEACHING THEE TO RISE TO THE GLORY OF ETERNAL BLISS BY THE STEPS OF HUMILITY AND THE SERVICE OF DUE SUBJECTION. IF THEN THOU DESIREST HEAVENLY CONSOLATION, and to rejoice for ever with the angelic spirits: FLEE CARNAL PLEASURE, WHICH BEGETS DEATH; seek the spiritual nourishment of the soul, which Christ has prepared for them that approach the table of His precious body: sweeter than all banquets of the flesh. FOR UNLESS THE OLD MAN WITH HIS DEEDS BE UTTERLY PUT OFF: HEAVENLY SWEETNESS CANNOT ENTER. And save the flesh be subject to the spirit, and all earthly care cast aside; the promised Paraclete shall not come: nor the eating of the paschal Lamb refresh interiorly. That therefore our inner being may be full of spiritual joy: all malice and naughtiness should be taken out of

the heart; that as new-born children we may walk in newness of life: WASHED WITH TEARS and clothed in white garments. Then let OUR BEHAVIOUR BE HUMBLE and grave: our eyes restrained, our affections pure: our voices ready, our ears open to the words of God: and ALL OUR SENSES WELL GUARDED ON ALL SIDES. For the angels, the holy ministers of God, are there, noting our actions, who rises earlier: who prays more devoutly, who chants more cheerfully: who seeks Jesus more fervently. Far from us therefore be the noise of the world, let light gossip be shunned; let our words be edifying, to give grace to all that hear: and for them may the speaker merit the blessing of one, who gives a good alms. Let the actions of the Saviour be repeated; let the good news of Jesus of Nazareth be spread abroad among us: to rejoice and delight all. Let the Crucified depart not from the mind: let Christ rising be met on every side. And, if He is not yet beheld with the eyes: in secret He is touched by frequent lamenting; and until He shows Himself to him, who prays: let him depart not from the tomb. Let the holy angels be questioned, who always enjoy His unveiled vision; that they tell us where the Lord is, or pray for us that He deign to appear to us in our grief: and comfort by His most sweet grace the hearts of them, that mourn. Would, O Lord Jesus, Thou wouldst deign to kindle my heart to seek Thee early with Mary, and to strengthen me in faith: Who, breathing, didst bestow the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. Open to me the meaning of the scriptures; AND LEAD ME AS THOU HAST PROMISED, INTO ALL TRUTH: Who art above all God, blessed for ever. Amen.

XXXI

Of the Mystic Name of the Pasch, and the leading of a New Life

1 Cor. 5. 7. *HRIST, our Pasch, is sacrificed.* The holy name of the pasch is most noted and known among the faithful: the mystery of which should be very greatly honoured among Christians. Let us therefore all consider: that which was done and instituted for our salvation. For the word pasch signifies the passing of the Lord; because Christ this day came back from death to life, passed from the world to Heaven: to teach us to despise earthly things, and to love heavenly. High praises then we owe to the heavenly Father, Who hath quickened us together in His beloved Son, afflicted and crucified in the flesh; by Whose bruises we are healed, and delivered from eternal death by His undeserved suffering: and again rejoiced exceedingly in His most glorious resurrection.

The sorrow of Christ's cruel death has passed, destroying the enmity of the former sin: and cleansing away all the stains of our guilt. Sweetness of ineffable joy has followed, and the height of everlasting glory; which shall be given to all born again in Christ by baptism, after the exile of this world: as to men coming back from Egypt to the joy of Paradise. For, by the sacrifice of the true Lamb, the spiritual Israel was freed from the captivity of the devil's damnation: and the new people of God passed to the liberty of the heavenly dwelling; because Christ, rising from the dead, changed the old pasch into a new: and turned temporal into everlasting life. Well then does the

apostle say, and holy Mother Church everywhere joyously sing: "Christ our pasch is sacrificed." 1 Cor. 5. 7. We should therefore always be mindful of the dolorous passion of Christ, as also of His gladsome resurrection for the comfort of our mortality; that by the sufferance of many tribulations for Christ we may have the hope and trust of reigning for ever with Him. Let us strive now in this holy and joyous time to rise to the desire of a new life: and with spiritual gladness sing praises to God. For Christ is able to aid us yet more: and more burningly kindle us with desire of heavenly life.

But he darkens the brightness of the paschal feast, whoever pants rather for the eating of meats, than for the communion of the precious body of Christ: WHEREIN THE SOURCE OF ALL SWEETNESS and the nourishment of the soul are contained. For in sooth without this most sacred food, every wealthy table luxuriously prepared is empty and tasteless. For as the soul is better than any body: so Christ, Who is the food of the soul, surpasses every taste in sweetness. And albeit now, because of the solemnity of the Lord's resurrection, there is more abundant rejoicing, and better foods are more freely given; nevertheless the frequenting of banquets should be MODERATE: and the appetite of the flesh curbed with the fear of God. FOR THIS IS PROFITABLE TO THE HEALTH OF BODY AND SOUL: and renders man more fit for the praises of God. Let not then the covetousness of the flesh overcome thee: but by devotion of mind conquer, in the power of the Holy Ghost, whatever material delight meets thy senses. Blessed is that soul, which is drawn by the odour of the ointments of Christ to taste the

heavenly banquet: and with the psalmist cries
Ps. 15. 11. and says: "At Thy right hand are delights even
Ps. 16. 15. to the end: but I shall be satisfied, when Thy glory shall appear." Assuredly all the foolish of heart are deceived, who, leaving aside true and heavenly goods, seek their consolation in earthly things: and without the curb of just moderation
Rom. 14. 17. covet to have much. "THE KINGDOM OF GOD," saith the apostle, "is not meat and drink: but PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST."

Who is he then that celebrates the pasch in the spirit? He, who passes over from vice to virtue, who rises from the old life and evil ways to the state of new devotion. Who is he, that worthily honours the pasch? He, who spurns worldly honours: and seeks the glory of Christ in all his good deeds. Who is he, that sacrifices the goat on the evening of the pasch? He, who truly repents of his sins: and henceforth ceases to sin. Who is he, that eats the roast lamb with lettuce? He, who sorrowfully meditates on Christ suffering on the cross: and, living blamelessly, chastises himself. Who is the true Hebrew, that crosses the Red Sea? He, who passes from the sense of the flesh to the sweetness of the spirit: and forgetting the things that are behind, stretches out to those that are before. Who is the true son of Abraham? He, who, from servile fear, sets forth into the liberty of the children of God. Who is the true disciple of Jesus? He, who perfectly renounces all earthly things: and forsakes his own will. Who is worthy to sit at the table of Christ? He, who freely humbles himself for the love of Christ. Who is ready to enter the kingdom of Heaven? He, who despises the kingdom of the world and all earthly

splendour. He is the friend of God, the citizen of Heaven: the master of the world. Who is FIT TO GAZE UPON THE FACE OF CHRIST, and dive into the secrets of Heaven? He, who is clean of heart, fervent in prayer: and wholly given to interior things. Who is dear and acceptable to God? He, who is abject in his own eyes: and who holds in small esteem all that passes away.

XXXII

OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS INTO HEAVEN

ASCEND to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God, alleluia. The most gracious Jesus, the comforter of the afflicted, after He was risen from the dead, by His most faithful lover Mary Magdalene, bade the joys of the new salvation be announced to His disciples overwhelmed with sadness in His death: saying thus: "Go to My brethren: and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father.'" O truly sweet and heavenly message: full of joy and love. What is so pleasant for the faithful to hear, as the ascension of the Lord into Heaven; as the passing of Jesus to the Father to intercede for us, that we may approach Him securely, Whom we have offended in many things? For since our sins make a separation between us and God; how can we be reconciled, save by the Mediator, Christ Jesus? By Whom we have access to the Father, Who for us paid the debt of sins: and made ready a place to dwell with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. "I ascend," He saith, "to My Father and your Father." O wondrous condescension of God to

John, 21. 17.

John, 21. 17.

John, 21. 17.

miserable men and fleeing disciples: to the sheep scattered and lying in despair. He does not utter the title of His power, nor terrify them with a word of threatening; He does not reprove the crime of high treason, nor reproach them guilty of faithlessness: but MINDFUL OF HIS INNATE GENTLENESS, He offers mercy, and lays aside vengeance; and, after grievous fault and fearful flight, gives expression to the sweetness of brotherly love: and extends to all unfailing charity,
John, 21. 17. saying thus: "Tell My brethren." O honied sweetness of Jesus most indulgent in all His converse. Who though He be powerful, and grievously offended by His friends and subjects; sent not His torturers to drag the guilty to prison, nor degraded any one from an office bestowed: but as a good shepherd, who loves his own sheep, pities their weakness, and takes thought for their safety: now indeed He reveals Himself by angels, and now by Mary IN HIS OWN NAME gives PARTICULAR command that word be carried to His sorrowing brethren of the glory of His resurrection,
John, 21. 17. saying, "Go to My brethren: and say to them, I ascend to My Father." The sweet Master speaks sweet words: and calls them brothers, who had previously offended Him: the more fully to commend His charity, whereby He loved them even to the end. For first indeed He converted them from the vanity of the world to faith in Him; great miracles He wrought in their midst: boundless favours He bestowed upon them; the way of truth He taught them: and chose them beyond all the saints to the honour of the apostolic dignity. And these, after the storm of temptation and the weakness of fall, He calls back to repentance: and raises to a more fervent state of holiness:

and rejoices with the vouchsafing of His presence; with open proofs and showing the wounds of His Passion strengthens them wavering in the faith, that they may rise the more boldly: showing them a way whereby they ought to ascend to unfading glory. "I ascend to My Father," He saith. John, 21. 17. "If you loved Me, you would certainly rejoice in this word; for it will be profitable to you that I ascend to the Father, Who sent Me: that I may prepare a place for you in the kingdom of My Father, where you shall rejoice with all My elect for ever. Be not troubled therefore: nor overmuch saddened at My departure. I will ask the Father for you: that your sins be forgiven. I will strengthen you in adversity; I will console you in the exile of this world; I will crown you in the heavenly kingdom: where your joy shall be full, and safe from every foe. FOR IT HATH PLEASED Luke, 12. 32. THE FATHER TO GIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO YOU POOR AND HUMBLE: WHO, DESPISING THE ALLUREMENTS OF THE WORLD, HAVE FOLLOWED MY FOOTSTEPS."

And now at this time, when Christ was taken up in the glory of the Father, the hearts of the apostles were lifted to heavenly things; and they rejoiced over His ascension: hoping that, laying aside the burden of the flesh, they should follow Him to glory. For a GREAT trust was in them of attaining the kingdom above: who treading under foot THINGS BELOW lead a life of poverty for Christ. They had moreover the Holy Ghost promised them: strengthened by Whose gift, they feared to suffer neither chains nor prisons, nor dreadful torments of death. O happy and glorious ascension; by which man's nature was exalted above the angels: and the destruction of the lost angels

repaired by the number of men elect, signed with the blood of Christ.

Now therefore take heed thou also, faithful soul, who readest these things, to follow Christ with the steps of love: for the bodily ascension of Christ into Heaven: is the spiritual raising of the mind to God. Therefore let the sojourning of the present life give thee no further pleasure: but let rather the heavenly dwelling with the holy angels allure thee; where the souls of the saints rest from all toil and grief: gazing upon the face of Christ for ever and ever. Often turn over the sweet word of Christ, which He spoke to His disciples before the Passion, that "I go to prepare a place for you": and remember that thou hast not here a lasting city. Sigh from thy innermost heart, because of the many hindrances that keep thee back from heavenly things: and pray to be delivered from present evils: and to go to Christ more speedily. For this is much better than here daily to struggle against vices: and ever to be fearful of divers perils. Cry with the spouse in the Canticles and say, "Draw me after Thee: where abide all good things and joy without end." But, alas, that happy hour has not yet come: it is not yet time to reign, BUT TO SUFFER. Therefore it behoves to await the time of reward preordained of God; and pray without ceasing until God's kingdom come: concerning which Jesus often spoke to His disciples, before He went up into Heaven; that thereby having heard the promises of everlasting glory: the combat of the present life may become more bearable. And so much the more does a soul burn with desire for the things of Heaven, the more cruelly it is afflicted in this life: FOR THIS IS A CLEAR TOKEN

John, 14. 2.
Heb. 13. 14.
Cant. 1. 3.

IN THE ELECT for the attainment of eternal salvation: if they bear patiently tribulations and labours for the name of Christ. "For it behoved CHRIST to suffer: and so to enter into His glory." And so by patience and toil lies the way to rest: for the Father admits no man into Heaven, save he has followed His most beloved Son by the Passion and the Cross: Whom He delivered up to be crucified for our sins. Lift up therefore thy heart on high, raise thy eyes towards Heaven: consider whither thy Beloved has departed, stretch out thy hands after Him; pray, with bended knees and frequent groans, that He send thee the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, into THY HEART DRY and cold: to kindle thee and guide thee to the CHEERFUL fulfilment of EVERY GOOD WORK. Amen. Luke, 24. 26.

XXXIII

On the Feast of Pentecost, of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost

THEY *were all filled with the Holy Ghost: and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.* To-day, in holy Church, is solemnized the glorious feast of the Holy Ghost; to-day on all sides the gathering of the faithful is glad with votive joys: the choirs of clerics sing joyously in hymns and psalms; the priests celebrate masses: and all together praise God most highly in the coming of the Holy Ghost. For to-day the apostles openly received the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire: and at once they sweetly burned with love within: and without they boldly preached the word of God. To-day the faith of Acts, 2. 4.

Christ began to be proclaimed: and the number of believers in Jerusalem to be increased. To-day there was great joy among the people: and by the apostles great signs were wrought upon the sick. For FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD: SO ABUNDANT A GIVING OF THE HOLY GHOST WAS UNHEARD OF. To-day holy religion and the apostolic life took its rise; which afterwards became the mirror of holiness for all religious: and the law of living in common without anything of one's own. To-day the holy apostles were so strengthened in the love of Christ, and enlightened in the grace of the Holy Ghost; that they could not be crushed by any adversity, or softened by any prosperity: or beguiled by any errors, or drawn away from the entirety of the faith by any arguments. To-day men, lowly and simple, have been made wise: and poor fishermen become GREAT TEACHERS; and what they learnt not in the schools by disputation: this they have received from Heaven BY DEVOUT PRAYER. To-day men, illiterate and fearful, have become eloquent and bold; and they that had known but one tongue: by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, speak of God in the words of all tongues. To-day earthly-minded men have become heavenly: and they that were before despised, are become a WONDER to EVERY nation under the sun; and they that were thought to know little or nothing: bring forth and expound testimonies to Christ from the law and the prophets. To-day an angelic life sprang up on earth, and a new heaven appeared in the world: because the faithful learnt to raise the mind from the flesh to the spirit, from lukewarmness to fervour, from earth to Heaven.

O how FERVENT they were, who were CONTENT

WITH SO LITTLE; how devout and obedient they became: who of their own accord submitted themselves to the direction of the apostles. These are the works of the Holy Ghost, Who gathered the hearts of the faithful from divers nations into one faith; raised them to Heaven by the hope of eternal goods: and suddenly kindled them with the torches of His love. By these holy apostles the primitive Church was established and spread through the world; imbued with sacred teachings: and strongly confirmed by many miracles. From these holy apostles and followers of apostles, the saintly hermits of old first received the pattern of perfect renunciation: and left after them many disciples as an example to us. From these apostolic men also and solitaries, dear to God, our glorious Father Augustine, the noble doctor, learnt contempt for the world: who, being afterwards made priest and bishop, founded a community of clerics; and began to live with many servants of God in common after the manner of the life of the apostles: to whom also he gave his rule, which he wrote, for their observance. In like manner the holy father Benedict, a strenuous follower of the apostolic life, brought forth another rule of monastic discipline, full of virtues: by which monks living religiously might tend to the glory of everlasting blessedness. But very many others also, religious men inspired by the grace of the Holy Ghost, desiring to follow the counsels of the gospel perfection: in different parts of the world instituted orders of sacred religion; and obtained such great grace from God, as to shine with apostolic signs: and illumine holy Church by teaching and example. Rightly then should all the faithful honour this most sacred day with

special devotion, and call upon the grace of the Holy Ghost: that they may merit to be penetrated and comforted by His visitation: enkindled by His love, cleansed by His dew from every stain of vices.

For all the saints and ELECT from the beginning of the world were drawn to the service of God, and called away from the errors of the gentiles, BY THE BREATHING OF THIS HOLY GHOST; AND WHOEVER HAVE RECEIVED DIVINE GIFTS: HAVE CHIEFLY PLEASED GOD IN HUMILITY.

Even yet the Holy Ghost works in His faithful many good works of charity pleasing to Him, and profitable to others; and, if not evident miracles: nevertheless often He grants the comforts of interior devotion. HE OPENS ALSO TO THEM THAT PRAY and recite the psalms attentively THE SECRETS OF HOLY WRIT: WHICH ARE THE TRUEST TOKENS of His knowledge AND LOVE: He also bestows holy remedies of spiritual strength, against the manifold temptations of human frailty. For He it is, Who instructs the faithful by holy discourses; rules them by prelates, ministers the sacraments by priests: lest on the pilgrimage of this life, they turn aside from the right road, and faint in their labours. He Himself touches man's heart with sorrow for past sins; reproves for daily failings and the smallest defects: NOR SUFFERS THE GUILT OF A SLIGHT STAIN TO REMAIN ON THE CONSCIENCE OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL. He Himself arouses to renewed fervour: to devout prayer, to earnest reading, TO READY OBEDIENCE: TO SEEKING LOWLY THINGS, AND PERSEVERING IN DEVOUT EXERCISES. He Himself withdraws from earthly things: calls to quiet of heart, blames light words; soothes wrath, drives out lust: takes away envy, curbs

greed. He urges to shun sloth, to keep discipline: He teaches what is to be done, what is to be guarded against, within and without. He Himself is present to the troubled of heart: He comforts the lowly, lifts up the weak; hears the mourning, pities the weeping: grants pardon to the penitent.

As often therefore as thou art anxious and tempted, at once have recourse to heavenly aid: humbly call upon the grace of the Holy Ghost; display to Him all thy distress: and wholly commit thyself to His compassion; that according to His good pleasure and honour, He may mercifully direct all thy griefs to the greater profit of thy soul: and bring all to a saving end. For He knows all, He searches and penetrates all; and suffers nothing to befall thee without cause: He scourges and heals; brings low and upraises. For this is the special operation of the Holy Ghost in this weak body, subject to many miseries, that by true contrition the stains of sins be washed away; THAT PAST EVILS BE TURNED INTO FULLER HUMILITY: that good begun grow to more perfect; so that thereby NO TIME PASS WITHOUT SPIRITUAL PROFIT: but that every work, word, and thought tend and continue to the honour of God and the glory of the most blessed Trinity. Which to our prayer may the Holy Ghost deign to grant by His most loving grace: Who most generously filled the hearts of the apostles this day. Amen.

XXXIV

Of the Comfort of the Holy Ghost

John, 14. 16.

WILL ask the Father: and He shall give you another Paraclete. When our Lord Jesus Christ was about to depart from His disciples in the body, He promised them, saddened for His absence, the spiritual comfort of the Holy Ghost; Who SHOULD NEVER LEAVE their hearts: but should abide with them for ever. O what a blessed promise of Christ, not of worldly joy, but OF THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST; which is so precious and sweet: THAT NOTHING CAN BE COMPARED WITH IT in all things human. The holy apostles had great comfort in the humanity of Christ, hearing without hindrance divine words from His mouth, and seeing with their own eyes His wondrous miracles; and therefore not without good cause were they saddened at His departure, to be parted, like orphans, from His most sweet fellowship: fearing to be left without the defence needful to them, amid the wickedness and scandals of the Jews. Wherefore He, the most gracious Master, knowing secrets and foreseeing the future, relieves His dear disciples of the threatening grief, and in place of His bodily presence FIRMLY promises them a comfort, spiritual and ABIDING IN THEM. For they were such: as to be WORTHY of heavenly consolation and the divine INDWELLING; inasmuch as they were now true despisers of the world: and PERFECT FOLLOWERS OF THE HUMBLE LIFE OF CHRIST. BECAUSE THE FATHER LOVES SUCH: for such the

Son prays: SUCH THE HOLY GHOST HEARS AND ENLIGHTENS.

See now the inestimable condescension of the divine graciousness: how the Son of God chose poor and simple men to the fellowship of His preaching for the conversion of the world; on whom also for the vile and valueless things of the world, which they had forsaken: He vouchsafed to bestow freely the precious gifts of the Holy Ghost. Why this? To teach that the glory of the world is to be spurned: and to show THAT HUMILITY IS MOST PLEASING TO HIM. Therefore, having heard these so divine oracles, O religious, flee honours and pleasures; put away worldly cares: and make ready thy heart for the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost by devout prayer. And if already thou art in a good state and hast left the ways of the world; do not look back again, do not be satisfied with the present: but more eagerly pant after things more perfect and more holy; and, in order to merit to receive now NEW grace, be INSTANT in compunction: and shut thyself in thy cell as in the upper room with the apostles. For this is a likely token of the presence of the grace of God, if a man long to possess higher things; if he inwardly grieve for his daily short-coming, IF HE ABSTAIN FROM MANY THINGS PERMITTED HIM: if he diligently ponder how he may progress unto better: IF HE NEVER DEEM HIMSELF PERFECT IN ANYTHING: NOR BELIEVE THAT HE HAS DONE ANYTHING WORTHILY. For it behoves thee UTTERLY TO RENOUNCE ALL LOWER THINGS, if thou desirest to be refreshed with the comfort of the Holy Ghost; if thou wilt be STRENGTHENED by His power: if thou longest to be inflamed with His love.

But we must ask further: by what exercises the holy apostles attained so great a grace. For they did not rise to such great perfection by a sudden change of life, or only in one day: but they made progress by degrees through increase of virtue in the school of Christ, as good pupils carefully taught by a good master. And first indeed they freely forsook all that was theirs for Christ's sake; they renounced kith and kin, and other worldly ties: ready to bear with Him toil and want and the curses of men. On which account before His Passion, He said to them, "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations." Behold the good beginnings of the apostles; that, stripped of earthly things and tried by adversity; they cleaved to Christ with perseverance. And although at the time of the Passion through fear of death they withdrew somewhat from Him, for this nevertheless they sorrowed much: and, more FULLY RECOGNIZING their own weakness, WITH GREATER HUMILITY and more fervent love they returned to Christ. For, after His resurrection, they were again visited by Him, and strengthened by His words and the Scriptures: that thus they might attain higher perfection in faith and the spiritual life. Finally, when Christ ascended into Heaven, they placed their whole hope in heavenly things: nor did they then grieve much at His departure; but were glad rather at the brightness of His glory: so that they returned with great joy into Jerusalem. There, gathered together in the supper-room, with one mind they were instant in prayer and holy meditation: and humbly and with much desire they prepared themselves for the grace of the Holy Ghost to be sent down upon them from

Luke, 22. 28.

Heaven. There, ABIDING WITH MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, they DEVOUTLY conferred together concerning the actions and teachings and miracles of our Saviour: and, as it is piously to be believed, they heard and learnt not a few mysteries of Christ from the Blessed Virgin. There, putting aside worldly cares, and shutting out vain discourses, they turned THEIR WHOLE DESIRE to interior things and the heavenly PROMISES; that they might merit to receive in addition to the gifts, which they already possessed, THE HOLY GHOST STILL MORE FULLY. And so it came to pass. For in His coming all were filled, and gifted and enlightened with such graces: that in signs and virtues and teaching they far outshone the patriarchs and prophets. For whatever was veiled in mystery in the law and the prophetic sayings, this by the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost they understood: and they were able to speak in divers tongues. The which was very necessary for the edification of the whole Church: that they should first be perfectly instructed in all the mysteries of our salvation: who were afterwards to preach the Gospel of Christ to every creature throughout the world. The heavenly Father then gave the good Spirit to them that asked Him: and enriched the hearts of the apostles with so OVERFLOWING A BLESSING, that now THEY HAD NO EARTHLY AMBITION; NOR FEARED ANY WORLDLY ADVERSITY; BUT WERE GLAD TO SUFFER REPROACH FOR THE NAME OF JESUS. And with the fullness of knowledge, He added unto them the armour of the spiritual warfare: that they might have divine wisdom against the errors of the Gentiles, to overcome the eloquence of the philosophers: and against the fury of persecutors, might un-

waveringly hold the palm of patience. Verily great grace shone in the apostles; inasmuch as men, so unskilled according to the world, in so short a time rose to such a height of holiness: that with the aid of the Holy Ghost their preaching reached even to the ends of the earth.

Following also on what has been already said, consider that the holy apostles, who were most dear to Christ, did not receive this spiritual comfort without labour and due preparation: they lived not without strife and bodily suffering in this world; but became so much the more zealous for Christ and the neighbour's salvation: the more they acknowledged that they had received fuller gifts than others. Of the which they sought not their own glory, nor a passing reward, nor the praise of men: but SIMPLY GOD'S honour, and the glory of Heaven after the toil of this life. Who verily strove to guard CAREFULLY, with HUMILITY AND MEEKNESS of heart, the heavenly-received grace in all their conversation amid many nations: not becoming tepid in leisure, not seeking the ease of the flesh: but COUNTING THE GAIN OF SOULS, by word and EXAMPLE they edified their flocks: and presented very great fruit to God. Their acts therefore and words, it is very profitable for all religious and devout to meditate earnestly; who have purposed to take up their cross for Christ, and follow the apostolic life; that thereby they may be ever eager for progress in a better life: and persevering in the discipline of the Order, by the help of the grace of the Holy Ghost, may take hold of eternal life with all the saints. Amen.

XXXV

Of the Holy and United Life of the Primitive Church in Jerusalem

THE multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul in God. Acts, 4. 32. O how holy and pleasant was that assembly in the primitive Church, gathered by the Holy Ghost; which was proof against disturbance: as long as the unity of faith was kept whole in the bond of charity. To keep this perfectly, very great help is found in the renunciation of proprietorship in temporal goods; conformity in holy conduct: ready obedience in subjects; exemplary life in superiors: loving condescension towards the weak; severe amendment of excesses: due order in divers offices. And that nothing haply be wanting or lost to the community: all according to their power should promote the common good: that love may be resplendent in all for the holy work: and God be thereby greatly glorified. All these good things are seen first practised by the holy apostles; and by them afterwards handed down to others of the faithful: but especially commended for imitation to religious and the prelates of the Church. For as long as the apostolic life shone in the head and the members: good things were with them, and great grace in all things. And because they sought God, and spurned earthly things: temporal goods were added unto them with spiritual gifts; and they were held worthy of so much the greater honour: the more humbly they esteemed themselves and despised all worldly glory. Well and

moderately they used the gifts received; they did not become haughty in the dignities and benefices bestowed on them: but with fatherly care they ruled their subjects in great discipline. Moreover in compassion they most generously succoured great numbers of the poor and sickly; they offered likewise words of holy comfort to the afflicted and tempted: they restrained themselves and others from idle discourse; knowing
Matt. 12. 36. that for every idle word that men shall speak: each must render an account in the judgement.

But when some had commenced to cool from the heat of faith, and to turn aside without restraint after ease of the flesh: to seek their own, to ambition honours: alas, at once murmurs arose and scandals: and THE TARES OF DISCORD WICKEDLY SOWN BY THE EVIL ONE appeared: to spoil the grain of the good seed in the Lord's field. But this deadly disease and commencement of dissension the holy apostles met with a most wise counsel: and they chose faithful ministers to provide the needful nourishment to the multitude of the saints. But they themselves were instant in prayer and preaching, as they had been TAUGHT BY THE HOLY GHOST, PREFERRING SPIRITUAL TO TEMPORAL THINGS: and they brought forth the witness of the law and the prophets to settle the questions that were moved and the cases that arose. And the Holy Ghost went still further in bestowing His gifts more fully upon the newly converted. For He filled some of the believers with the spirit of prophecy for the consolation of the primitive Church: He appointed others teachers for the instruction of the ignorant; He converted also many priests and masters of the law to the gospel truth: He likewise wrought

many signs and wonders among distant nations to spread the Catholic faith. The implacable foe, the devil, saw this and envied; he grieved, and moved the kings and princes of the earth: to rage in arms and pursue the faithful on all sides. And because more plenteous grace flourished in Jerusalem, and the apostolic fervour commenced to make greater increase; therefore Satan stormed more furiously there, and strove to crush the beginnings of the budding Church with the scourge of persecution: and to drive them from their dwellings to foreign nations. But this malice of the devil and temporary persecution of the faithful, God turned to the salvation of many: and to the more wide-spread knowledge of His holy name. And the temporal tribulation of the just was made the washing away of vice; and what the crafty tempter had designed for their destruction: the loving Saviour ordained for the crown of their patience. For if there had not been so grievous a persecution in the world: there would not be so many martyrs crowned in Heaven. For many of the faithful resolved rather to shed their blood, than to deny the faith: and more willingly to undergo death: than depart from the love of Christ. FAR BE IT, FAR BE IT, THAT SATAN SHOULD BE MORE POWERFUL WITH HIS FOES TO HARM: THAN CHRIST WITH HIS HOLY ANGELS TO DEFEND. For the malignant spirit could have done NOTHING AGAINST THE PIOUS, UNLESS God had justly suffered it; Who, knowing the deeds and strength of each, by such occasions of sorrow, raised His elect TO EVERLASTING GLORY: and buried their foes by inexorable damnation in eternal fire. Thus good and bad, according to their deserts, merit to receive what

is just: for the justice of God leaves no good unrewarded, no evil unpunished.

Nor should it scandalize weak souls that so soon tares and many murmurings arose in the Church; for the evil are always mingled with the good: and some imperfect walk with the perfect. For the more holy they are, the fewer they are: as we experience in divers religious places. For the number of beginners is seen greater than the number of the perfect: and the total of the contemplative is fewer than that of the active. Amid many subjects also few are found fitted for office: and for ruling themselves and others well still fewer. Herein appears human weakness, and OUR PRIDE IS HUMBLED; that we are so prone to vice: and slow to pursue the more perfect. No one, however, can rightly reproach another that he is wanting and unsuited: for as another is weak, so art thou also. A rare bird is true perfection on earth: and in every place are found broken vessels. Every man then should have his eye upon himself, and pity his erring neighbour: nor be angry, if at times he transgresses. Whence blessed James saith, "In many things we all offend." We must have recourse then to the confession of humility: that where the shortcoming of our holiness is wanting, the acknowledgement of our own weakness may supply. AND SO MUCH THE MORE HUMBLE LET US BE IN ALL THINGS: THE MORE DISTANT WE ARE FROM TRUE perfection. In sinning and falling we are brethren: no one is sure of his perseverance. As long then as we live here: it is necessary to bear with the weak: and also to have some foes. For Christ long bore with the imperfections of His disciples: and often heard the

James, 3. 2.

calumnies of the Pharisees: Who was in all things perfect. But God knows that the adversities of this world lead to much good: which are seldom wanting to the good and right of heart. For by these thorns and distresses the soul is drawn back from earthly pleasures; the heart is aroused to the love of heavenly things: a man is exercised in patience; he learns to compassionate the afflicted, he is humbled in grief: he is made like to the sufferings of Christ; he becomes more compunctious, less dissipated: he prays more fervently, he groans more frequently; he wearies of living, he longs to be dissolved and to be with Christ: because there is no peace in this world. But the loving Lord, Who knows what is more wholesome for us: often delays to grant the desires of His servants, for the sake of better: that thereby they may be the more fitted in purity to obtain the promised joys in Heaven. He hears their cry, He sees the trouble of the afflicted; but He does not immediately take away their grief: that they may merit the more by endurance of evils. He pities certainly and hears unto their salvation: but not always unto their own desire. And because He decrees to give them a kingdom of everlasting happiness: He mingles with their life divers cups of bitterness; that they may not place their hope in earthly things: nor love their exile more than the fatherland of heavenly bliss.

But temporal miseries, patiently borne, avail very much for the washing away of sins: for the reconciliation of the divine mercy, for the lessening of purgatorial pain: for the gaining of greater grace, for the increase of higher glory to come. What man is so pure, so guarded and perfect in all his conduct from morning even unto night;

who does not fail sometimes in word or deed, or thought, knowingly or unknowingly? Who is possessed of so good a conscience; that he has nothing to confess? Who is so chaste and abstemious; that he fears not to be reproved of some fault in the judgement to come? For all things shall be very closely searched in the presence of God, the most righteous judge: even those things that now seem of little or no account. While therefore there is time, and room for mercy: let us all together repent: and fervently amend ourselves. God is kind: He freely pardons our faults: if we truly acknowledge and grieve for them. And since we are brothers in Christ, let us pray for one another, as brotherly charity demands: let us serve one another, support one another, warn one another, comfort one another: rejoice together, be sad together. Let us love one another, as Christ also hath loved us, and delivered Himself for us; Who long bore with us in our offences of the past, and still daily bears with our imperfections, in the hope of amendment: that we may learn to compassionate our neighbours, and pray for them. Heeding these things and doing them, we shall fulfil the law of Christ, and we shall be His true disciples and most dear friends; beloved of the Father, adopted by the Son, enkindled by the Holy Ghost: predestined and BLESSED by all the holy Trinity. Then also of us shall that be able to be said and verified, which is read of the primitive Church in the Acts of the Apostles;

Acts 4. 32. that the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul in God: and all things were common unto them. Amen.

OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

OF HEARING AND SPEAKING GOOD WORDS

OUR beloved Lord Jesus Christ saith, *Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* Give heed now to those which here follow.

A good word is praiseworthy. An idle word, is better unspoken. A humble word, very greatly edifies. A mild word, breaketh wrath. A harsh word, troubles hearts. A discreet word, gives understanding. A sweet godly word, makes glad. A comfortable word, is a golden word. A wise word, is very profitable in season. A hasty word, drives away friends. A loose word, is shameful. A sincere word, is worthy of honour. A serviceable word, merits grace. A prudent word, is very precious, and necessary to every man, who wishes to be blameless in his life. IT MUST BE A VERY GOOD WORD OF EDIFICATION, TO BE WORTH MORE THAN SILENCE. It is better to hold one's peace, than to quarrel. All words are not to be believed, nor to be carried further.

To be silent and endure, acquires peace and gives gladness. As long as you live, you must

learn to suffer, to speak little, to pray often, to aid the weak, to shun the evil. To undergo a little, brings much repose. To seek no dignity, to desire no honour, is the straight way to eternal life.

Set your trust and hope in God alone. Be humble and merciful towards the unfortunate without exception. Act according to the counsel of God, and turn from evil paths, thus shall you please God well, and escape the enemy's snares, by God's help grow in virtue, and stand firmly from within.

So noble is virtue and a good holy life, that it surpasses all beauty, and wealth and strength, and merits with certainty eternal life. Virtue overcomes all malice, and the vanity of the world, resists the temptation of the enemy, and compels the weak body to obey reason and the Holy Ghost.

God must strengthen us all in virtue, and save us from all sins, that after this mortal life we may be made worthy to go into life everlasting. Amen. In all our needs and at every moment, in every beginning and end, may Mary, the holy Mother of God, assist us, with Jesus, her beloved Son. Amen.

In the year of the Lord 1456.

Ended and written by the hands of brother Thomas Kempis.

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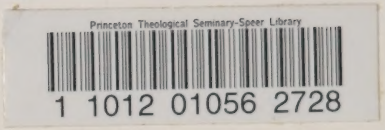

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